

MS. B. 1.

DISCOURSES

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS

AND

OCCASIONS

BY
BENJAMIN WILLIAMS.



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THE C O N T E N T S.

D I S C O U R S E I.

W H A T is Faith in Christ, and
who may be deemed a true and
found Believer in him?

J O H N III. 36.

*He that believeth on the Son, bath everlasting
Life; and he, that believeth not the Son,
shall not see Life; but the Wrath of God
abideth on him.*

Page 1

D I S C O U R S E II.

True Christianity; and the only infallible
Guide to Christian Orthodoxy.

J O H N XVIII. 36.

What is Truth? 25

D I S C O U R S E III. IV. V.

Christ an Honour to his Followers; and
the most illustrious Patron of religious
Liberty.

I. P E T. II. 7.

*Unto you therefore who believe, he is an
HONOUR.* 52. 69. 93

A 2

D I S-

iv The C O N T E N T S.

D I S C O U R S E VI. VII.

Christian Self-denial explained, and recommended.

M A T. XVI. 24.

Then said Jesus unto his Disciples, if any Man will come after me, let him deny himself.

119. 133

D I S C O U R S E VIII.

Our Saviour's Encomium on worldly Men explained, and properly improved.

L U K E XVI. 8.

The Children of this World are in their Generation wiser than the Children of Light. 149

D I S C O U R S E IX.

The real and fervent Desire of Virtue an infallible Means of Happiness.

M A T. V. 6.

Blessed are they, who hunger and Thirst after Righteousness; for they shall be filled. 175

D I S C O U R S E X XI.

The Apostolic Rule of Preaching:

II. C O R.

The C O N T E N T S.

II. C O R. IV. 5.

*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus
the Lord, and ourselves your Servants for
Jesus sake.*

191. 207

D I S C O U R S E XII.

Occasioned by the Death of a near and honoured Relation, to whom the Character in the Text was generally thought, by such as best knew him, to be peculiarly applicable.

P S A L M XXXVII. 37.

Mark the perfect Man, and behold the up-right: For the End of that Man is Peace.

231

D I S C O U R S E XIII.

Being the Substance of two Discourses delivered at WOTTON UNDEREDGE, February 6, 1756, the Day appointed for a general Fast, on Occasion of the Earthquake at Lisbon, and the critical Situation of public Affairs.

P R O V E R B S XIV. 34.

Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any People.

261

D I S-

vi The C O N T E N T S.

D I S C O U R S E X I V.

Being the Substance of two Discourses delivered at SARUM February 17, 1758, the Day appointed for a public and general Fast.

P s A L M XX. 7.

*Some trust in Chariots, and some in Horses ;
but we will remember the Name of the
LORD our God.*

299

D I S C O U R S E X V.

Delivered at SARUM, February 16, 1759, the Day appointed for a public and general Fast.

P S A L M C III. Part of the 9th, and the whole 10th Verse.

The LORD is plenteous in Mercy. — He hath not dealt with us after our Sins; nor rewarded us according to our Iniquities. 339

D I S C O U R S E X VI.

Being a farewell Discourse delivered at WOTTON UNDEREDGE, January 2, 1757. 3 NO 63

I I C O R. XIII. II.

FINALLY, BRETHREN, FAREWELL. 363
D I S .

DISCOURSE I.

What is Faith in Christ; and who
may be deemed a true and sound
Believer in him?



JOHN III. 36.

He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting Life; and he, that believeth not the Son, shall not see Life; but the Wrath of God abideth on him.

WHEN once it is acknowledged that Christianity is *true*, and of *divine Original*, the great Importance of *Faith in Christ*, the *Author* of it, will be readily admitted. *Faith in Christ* is set forth in the *Gospel* as one of the *grand Terms* of our *Salvation*. It is represented as ~~essential to~~ a State of Acceptance with God, and as a Qualification indispensably requisite to the Attainment

B

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2 D I S C O U R S E . I.

of a *blessed Immortality*. On the contrary, the *Want* of this Principle, where it might have been attained, is spoken of as attended with the most ruinous and fatal Consequences. All this appears upon the Surface of our Text. *He, that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting Life; and he, that believeth not the Son, shall not see Life; but the Wrath of God abideth on him.* “ If “ God sent his only begotten Son to re- “ veal certain Truths, and furnished him “ with Credentials sufficient to induce the “ Belief of them in every honest Inquirer; “ it cannot be a Matter of Indifference, “ in Regard to our Salvation, whether we “ believe or disbelieve them.” God, who ever acts according to perfect Wisdom, and never does any Thing in vain, “ would “ not send his Son upon an idle, and insig- “ nificant Errand; which would be the “ Case, if men, notwithstanding the Suf- “ ficiency of the Evidence, for Want of “ a proper Use of their Faculties, might “ finally and obstinately reject the Message, “ without endangering their eternal Wel- “ fare. Such a Conduct would doubt- “ less

DISCOURSE I. 3

" less be highly criminal and affronting
" to God, and therefore punishable, in
" Proportion to the Guilt attending it."
What that *Proportion* is, God alone is ca-
pable of informing us; and therefore in ad-
justing our Ideas of it, we must be entirely
guided by what he has thought fit to reveal
in Relation to it. The inexpressibly aw-
ful and alarming Terms in which the Gos-
pel speaks concerning this Point, are well
known; it is therefore needless to give a
particular Detail of the several Passages,
which relate to it. Suffice it to observe,
in general, with respect to such, as dis-
obey the Gospel, and finally and obsti-
nately reject its superior Grace, after ha-
ving had a fair Opportunity to consult its
various Evidences, that their Destruction
is represented as certain and inevitable;
and their Punishment as peculiarly severe.
If the Word spoken by Angels was steadfast,
and every Transgression and Disobedience re-
ceived a just Recompence of Reward; how
shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salva-
tion, which at the first began to be spoken by
the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them

B 2 that

4 DISCOURSE I.

that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost. Heb. ii. 2—4. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, to take Vengeance on them that obey not the Gospel; who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord and the Glory of his Power. 2 Thess. i. 7 — 9. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not, who refused him, who spoke on Earth, namely Moses; much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him, that speaketh from Heaven; namely Christ. Such as are guilty of this, we are told, are deserving of aggravated Misery, and much sorer Punishment. Concerning such as contemned the Mission and Character of Christ, and refused Obedience to his Gospel, he himself hath said, that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah, in the Day of Judgment, than for them.

Thus explicit and awful are the Threatenings, which the Gospel denounces against

DISCOURSE I. 5

against such as wilfully disobey it, and finally reject it; but then it has no where authorized us to make a particular Application of them; this being the Province only of him, who knoweth the Hearts of Men, who sees with perfect Clearness their various Prejudices and Prepossessions, and who alone can determine, with absolute Certainty, when they are *vincible* and *curable*, or *invincible* and *irremediable*.

Again, the Gospel no where teaches us to extend the Consequences of Infidelity to such as never heard of it, and had no Opportunity to consider its Credentials, and examine its Proofs. On the contrary, it hath expressly told us, that *whosoever feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, in every Nation, though a Stranger to the Christian Faith, is, and shall be accepted with him.* For, as the Apostle Paul says, how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? For Faith cometh by hearing. How is it possible for any Man to believe what he knows nothing at all of? "That a Man shall be accepted according to what he hath, or might have; and not

6 DISCOURSE I.

according to what he hath not, or could not "have;" is a Maxim which hath its Foundation in the unchangeable Nature, and Reason of Things, and is expressly confirmed by the Law of Christ.

The Sum of what hath been said is this. The Consequences of *Infidelity*, when it is owing to the Want of Integrity, and due Inquiry, are represented in the Gospel as infinitely ruinous and fatal; whereas nothing is more certain than that Cases of *unconquerable Prejudice*, and *unavoidable Ignorance* are entirely excepted.

Having thus sufficiently shewn the *Danger* attending *Unbelief*, when it proceeds from *an evil Heart*, and also pointed out the particular *Limitations*, with which the several tremendous Declarations, contained in the Gospel, in Relation to it, are to be understood; I shall now proceed to consider the other Part of my Text, which expresses the peculiarly great and distinguished Felicity of *Christian Believers*; or of all those by whom Christianity has been *properly received*. *He, that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting Life.*

So

DISCOURSE I. 7

So frequently and clearly is this Truth expressed in the Christian Revelation, that *no Christians*, in the least, dispute it. It is allowed by all, who profess the Christian Name, that *proper Faith* in Christ entitles every one that possesses it, to all the *present and future Privileges* of Christianity; to all *needful, and convenient Good* whilst here, and, in a future World, to perfect Happiness and unfading Glory. In a former Part of this Chapter, where our Text is, we find our Saviour speaking as follows; *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* Perfectly conformable to this Declaration of our blessed Lord are the Sentiments of all Christians: To this they all unanimously assent, how much soever they may differ in their *particular Explications* of the *Christian Faith*. It is allowed by all that *Faith in Christ* is the only *Faith characteristic* of a *Christian*; nor was it ever questioned by any *professed Christian*, but that every one, possessed of *proper Faith* in Christ, shall in-

8 DISCOURSE I.

fallibly attain all the inestimable Blessings of Salvation. Therefore the whole and only Difficulty, if any should yet remain, consists in determining what that *Faith in Christ* is, with which Salvation is connected.

The Subject is of unquestioned Importance, and deserves to be most seriously considered. Eternal Happiness is no trifling Concern. In a Matter of such infinite Moment it would be exceedingly desirable to bring our Thoughts to a Point, and to be able to determine with some good Degree of *Precision* and *Certainty*. Suppose we attempt it. The Attempt is laudable, and if it succeed, will not be unprofitable. If I approve not myself a *Helper of your Joy*, I appear in this Place to no valuable Purpose. Under the real and unfeigned Influence of this Thought I would seriously and impartially inquire what is to be understood by *Faith in Christ*, that *Faith which is unto Salvation*? I apprehend a general, and, upon the whole, a just Definition of it, may be easily and soon given.

What

DISCOURSE I. 9

What is it but an unfeigned *Belief* of the *Authenticity*, and *divine Original* of the Christian Revelation; or, in other words, a *firm Persuasion* of the *Truth* of what the Gospel *testifies concerning Christ*, accompanied with a *suitable, correspondent Influence* upon a Man's whole *Temper and Behaviour*.

With Respect to the *practical Influence* of true and *saving Faith* in Christ, I reckon that all Christians are perfectly *agreed*. It is allowed on all Hands, that the *Fruit* of *saving Faith*, that *Faith*, whose *End is Everlasting Life*, is ever *unto Holiness*. Christians declare, with one Voice, that *Faith in Christ without good Works attending it is dead; perfectly useless and vain; or that without Holiness, both of Heart and Life, no Man, by his Faith in Christ what it will, shall see the Lord, and attain eternal Bliss.*

Thus far we have found our Way plain and easy. The whole Difficulty then, if any, attending the *Explication* of the christian *Faith* must be entirely confined to the *speculative or notional Part of it, or in deter-*

TO DISCOURSE I.

determining with *sufficient Accuracy* and Precision, what it is that a *true Believer* in Christ does *really believe*. I have already shewn that the more *speculative* and *notional* Part of Faith in Christ, though insufficient when alone, is yet of high importance, and even an *established Term of divine Acceptance*, except in Cases of *unsurmountable Prejudice*, and *unavoidable Ignorance*. It is then of some considerable moment to inquire what *true Faith* in Christ is, so far as it is *notional* or *speculative*, or what it is that every *true believer* in Christ does *actually believe*, or to speak perhaps in still plainer Language, what is the christian *Creed*, that *Form of sound Words*, the *Belief* of which, except in the Cases now mentioned, is so indispensably necessary to Salvation. Why, in one Word, it is the **BIBLE**.

The **BIBLE**, says a great Writer, when disputing with the *Romanists*, the **BIBLE** is the only Religion of *Protestants*; and he might have added, the **BIBLE** is, or *ought to be* the only Religion of *Christians*. All our Knowledge of *Christ* must be derived

DISCOURSE I. II

ved from *Scripture*. To this the great Author of our Religion himself hath born express Witness. Search the *Scriptures*, for they are they which testify of me. Imagination, and even mere, unassisted Reason are out of the Question. Reason, though an inestimable Privilege, a most honourable Distinction of our Nature, and a Light, which God himself hath given us, yet has its Boundaries, beyond which it is capable of giving us no Assistance. Of the Knowledge of *Christ* it must have ever left us entirely destitute. With Regard to this Knowledge the *Scriptures* are our only Guide. If ever, in our Inquiries after *Christian* Truth, we in the least Degree renounce their Guidance, we enter the Regions of absolute Uncertainty, and perfect Darkness. All Attempts to be wise, in Relation to this Point, above what is written, would be utterly vain, and ineffectual.

It being thus sufficiently manifest that the Faith of Christ, or what every Christian does, or ought to believe concerning him, is wholly confined within the Bounds of Revelation, the next Question that naturally

12 DISCOURSE II.

rally offers itself to our Consideration is, what is the Account, which Revelation gives of him? Or what are those several Particulars recorded in Scripture concerning Christ, which are the Objects of the Christian's Faith?

This Question, I apprehend, might be very satisfactorily answered as follows; the Dignity of his Person, and divine Character, as the well beloved and only begotten Son of God, the express Image of his Person, and the bright Representation of his Glory: His Incarnation, or his being the Word, who was made Flesh: The History of his Life and Actions, and various Sufferings: The sinless Perfection of that Example, which he hath left us for our Imitation, the Doctrine he preached, the mighty and miraculous works, he performed in Support of his high Pretensions, his dying for Sin, the just for the unjust: His Resurrection, the third Day, from the dead, his Ascension into Heaven, and constant Intercession for us at the right Hand of God: The universal Dominion committed to him as Mediator between God and Man, and his rightful and

DISCOURSE I. 13

and important Claims upon us under that Character: The Fullness of Grace, which it hath pleased God should dwell in him for our Supply, and all the various Blessings, which, according to the Tenor of the Covenant of Mercy, he hath Authority to bestow upon us: and finally, his second Coming, at the End of the World, to complete the Designs of his mediatorial Kingdom: to raise the dead, to judge, in Righteousness, the whole World, to render to every Man according to his real Character, according to what he hath done in the Flesh, whether it be good, or evil; investing the righteous with an inconceivably blessed Immortality, and consigning the wicked, and all the Workers of Iniquity, to everlasting Punishment: in a Word, all and every Part of the Discovery made in Scripture concerning Christ, is a real and proper Object of a Christian Believer's Faith, as far as he can perceive it, and is able to understand it.

But to advance one step further. What is the *true, full, and precise Meaning* of the several Particulars now specified, and of all

14 DISCOURSE I.

all others of a similar Kind, that are contained in the sacred Writings? Or what is the truly evangelical, and orthodox Sense of them? For if they are not believed according to their true Signification, it would be as well perhaps, if not better, not to believe them at all.

Here the wide and unbounded Field of Controversy opens! Here the Sentiments of Christians, the best of Christians are infinitely various! To the Question last proposed each different Person, if consulted, would return, more or less, a different Answer! Among so vast a Multitude of discordant Opinions, who can, who dares be peremptory and decisive, especially if he be a Man of cool Reflection, and of a truly candid and enlarged Mind? All that the ablest, and most intelligent Christian can reasonably propose to do, in the present Case, is only to declare his own Sentiments, or to publish his own Faith; and I reckon that even this he ought to do with Meekness and Fear; with great Modesty and Humility. My own Sentiments I might now declare, I have often declared them.

DISCOURSE I. 15

them. But what am I, that my Sentiments should merit more Regard than those of *any other Man*? What *appears* to me to be perfectly *rational*, and completely *orthodox*; another perhaps may pronounce to be the most palpable *Absurdity*; or even *damnable Heresy*. But be this as it may, something to build upon infinitely more *certain*, and *stable* than mere *Opinion* is desirable, is necessary; something, in no Respect, inferior to *Infallibility itself*, as to all the grand Purposes of our Salvation.

Here I will speak *boldly*, as I *ought* to speak. A Privilege every Way *equal* to absolute Certainty and Infallibility is *attainable*; is within the Reach of all; and may be bought without Money and without Price. Though I *dare* not *positively* and *absolutely* pronounce, which is the *true* and *orthodox Sense* of this, or the other Part of the Christian Revelation; yet I might point out, with the utmost imaginable Ease, an *infallible Means* whereby we *may all attain it*. This most useful and important Means is not *very distant from*

16 DISCOURSE I.

from us. In Quest of it we need neither ascend into Heaven, nor descend into the Deep; for it is nigh unto us. My Brethren and Fellow Christians search your own Breasts, I trust you will find it there. You have within your own Bosoms an infallible Guide to Christian Truth; for it is nothing more, nothing less, than a good and honest Heart. Whoever possesses such a Heart has, within himself, a sure and certain Guide to all necessary Truth, and in particular the Truth as it is in Jesus*. Every Truth which can be deemed an essential Object of saving Faith; he steadfastly believes; or, to render this Point, if possible, still more intelligible, Faith in Christ, as far as it is absolutely necessary to Salvation, is what every honest upright Christian is in actual Possession of.

But it does not hence follow, that the Faith or Creed of any honest Christian is absolutely perfect. The most intelligent Christian knows only in Part; therefore as his Knowledge is imperfect, his Faith must be imperfect too; and in Order to increase

* See this Point proved at large in the next Discourse.

his

DISCOURSE I. 17

his Faith, it is absolutely requisite that he *first increase* his Knowledge. Though the sacred Scripture, with Respect to the great Things of Salvation, is plain and intelligible to every *honest, upright* mind, yet it contains *some Things*, as an *Apostle* expressly tells us, *which are dark; and hard to be understood;* so that the most *knowing Christian*, and the most *perfect* and *orthodox Believer* will have Room still to *improve* both in *Faith* and *Knowledge*, even till he arrives in the Regions of perfect Day.

Again, though Integrity can never subsist without a competent Measure of true speculative Faith; we are by no means to infer, that such a Faith may not take Place where there is no Integrity. Or, in other Words, every honest Man is a true *notional Believer*; so far as his Talents and Opportunities admit; but every true notional Believer is not an honest and good Man. *Simon Magus* was, perhaps, as eminently *orthodox*, as he was abandonedly wicked. It is said concerning him, that he believed and was *baptized*. He had acqui-

18 DISCOURSE I.

red a sufficient Insight into the Scheme of Christianity, or a competent Measure of christian Knowledge, and Orthodoxy; yet we are told, that he was notwithstanding *in the Gall of Bitterness, and the Bond of Iniquity*. The Prince of Darkness himself, he, who is emphatically styled the *wicked one*, is said to *believe*; and perhaps no Christian whatever, this Side Heaven, has so distinct and perfect an Idea of the christian Scheme in all its Parts, or so truly *orthodox* a Faith, as *he has*. He is amazingly intelligent, but yet a *Devil*. In a Word, tis *possible*, in the Nature of Things, to have *all Knowledge*; to understand *all Mysteries*, and even to have *all Faith*, and yet, as to *Integrity* and *real Goodness*, to be *NOTHING*.

Further, we are not to conclude, because every *honest* Christian believes all that is *necessary* to Salvation, that all *honest* Christians believe *alike*, or are possessed of *equal Measures* of Faith. Though some were *strong*, yet others were *weak in the Faith*, in the earliest and most enlightened Periods of Christianity. *Honest good Christians*

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DISCOURSE I. 19

ans differed in *Opinion*, widely differed, in the Age of *Inspiration*, and *apostolic Light*. Some in the Simplicity and Uprightness of their Hearts, imagined it to be necessary, not only to embrace the Truth as it was in *Jesus*, but also to conform to all the *ceremonial Institutions of Moses*; others, on the contrary, thought, *justly thought*, that the *mosaic Law* was no longer of any Force. An amazing Difference of Sentiments, a much greater Difference perhaps, unless we except that between *Protestants* and *Papists*, than any where subsists among *modern Christians*; yet the *apostolic Exhortation* to them *all* was, to receive one another in Love; and not to doubtful *Disputations*; to own and receive each other, in all *Respects* as Christians, and not to suffer any Difference of Opinion to be the Occasion of Contention, or in any Degree to diminish their mutual Charity.

Again, it does not follow, because all honest Christians are undoubtedly possessed of that Measure of Faith, which is necessary to Salvation; that they are entirely free from Error; or that *all*, that they believe

20 DISCOURSE I.

concerning Christ and his Religion, is true. If honest Christians never erred, they would never differ.

In short, all that can, or ought to be inferred is, that they entertain no wilful and destructive Errors; or that, *upon the whole*, they are right and orthodox. All the *Essentials* of Christianity they believe; or should a Possibility of their mistaking in any of these be admitted, we may pronounce with Certainty that they shall, in due Time, have their Mistakes rectified. *Whoever doeth the Will of God*, as far as he knows it, shall know every *Doctrine* of God, which he is at present either ignorant of, or mistaken in, so far as it is *essentially necessary* for him to know it. Conformable to this Testimony of our *Lord himself* is the Language of the Apostle *Paul*. *Let us, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: And if in any Thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you: Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same Thing.*

As to

DISCOURSE I. 21

As to the particular Number of Essentials, which constitute the Christian Faith, it never has been determined, and probably never will, in the present State of imperfect Light. However, this is *certain*, that *Faith in Christ*, which is the only Faith Characteristic of a *christian Believer*, *includes them all*; and that every *honest Christian* is possessed of *this Faith*, at least such a Measure of it as is *essentially necessary* to Salvation. Such is the excellent and unalterable Nature of Christianity, according to the Account, which the *Author* and *Finisher* of our Faith himself hath given of it, that whenever it is received into a *good and honest Heart*, it brings forth *Fruit to Salvation*. In this *good Ground*, in this choice and friendly Soil it *always thrives* and flourishes, till at length it bear *incorruptible Fruit*.

If so, let that Christian, who would attain *Affurance of Faith*; or be *certain* that he *believes unto Salvation*; instead of *disquieting himself in vain*; or disturbing his own, or others Peace, without Occasion, and to no valuable End, by attempting

22 DISCOURSE I.

Impossibilities, and endeavouring to *determine* Things that are *undeterminable*; let him, I say, instead of this consult the Witness in himself, diligently attend to the Testimony of his own Mind, the un-biassed Sentence of his own Conscience with Regard to his own *Uprightness* and *Honesty*: *For if his Heart condemn him not, he has good Confidence towards God*, and the End will be everlasting *Life*. He is even now approved of God, and has a well-grounded Hope of receiving, in due *Season*, the final Rewards of *Righteousness*.

But, though thus happily circumstanced, let him not rest *satisfied* with his *present Attainments*, but go on to *Perfection*; go on believing, to the saving of his Soul. Let him run with persevering Patience the noble Race that is set before him, looking unto Jesus. Let him not be weary in well-doing, but give all *Diligence* to add to his Christian *Faith, Virtue or Fortitude*, and to *Fortitude Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness Brotherly-kindness, and to Brotherly-kindness Charity*.

DISCOURSE I. 23

Charity. Let these Things be not only in him, but let them also abound; then he shall never fall, but make his Calling and Election sure and firm; and, at the Close of this short and vain Life, shall have an Entrance ministered unto him abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To conclude the whole; let us ardently and earnestly wish abundant Grace and Peace to all, in every place, and of every Denomination, who love the Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity, and *with the Heart believe* in his Name; to all without Distinction, and of *all Sects and Persuasions*, who shew by their good Works, and well ordered Conversation, that they possess a pure Conscience, and Faith unfeigned.

Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity; these three, but the greatest of these is CHARITY,

Died on

January 10th 1904
ment of said party
and the same will be
at the time of his death.

7

DISCOURSE II.

True Christianity; and the only infallible Guide to Christian Orthodoxy.



JOHN XVIII. 36.

— *What is Truth?*

“ **T**RUTH in Scripture, and in common Use, hath several Acceptations. Sometimes it signifies *the Nature of Things themselves*: And sometimes *the Conformity of our Apprehensions to the Nature of Things*; that we conceive aright of them, or just as they are: Truth in this latter Sense stands in Opposition to *Error*. At other Times by “ Truth is signified *the Agreement of our Words with our own Sense and Apprehension*, “ and

26 DISCOURSE II.

" and stands opposed to *Lying*." But in the Text, and in several other Places, in the Writings of the New Testament; by *Truth* is meant the *Christian Doctrine*, or *the Truth as it is in Jesus*.

The Question, *what is Truth?* Was proposed by Pilate the Roman Governor to our blessed Lord, and was occasioned by what he had told him in the preceding Verse. *For this Cause came I into the World, that I should bear Witness unto the Truth; every one, that is of the Truth, heareth my Voice.*

As if he had said, for this Purpose have I appeared in the World, that I might instruct Mankind in the Knowledge of *true Religion*, and confirm it by *credible Evidence*; an Evidence in every Respect sufficient to recommend it to the Belief and Profession of all *sincere Lovers of Truth*. Now Pilate replies, *what is Truth?* What is the Religion, which thou teachest? which is the same in Effect, as if he had said, *What is Christianity*.

The Question is doubtless of great Importance, and such as every *Christian*, and especially every *Christian Minister* ought to be

DISCOURSE II. 27

to be well able to resolve. What is the Truth, as it is in Jesus? The Truth, which Christian Ministers are indispensably obliged to *preach*, and all Christian People are equally bound to *bear*? What is pure, perfect, unadulterated Christianity? shall we seek for it among the various Sentiments, and Opinions entertained by the several Sects, and Denominations of Christians?

We may be very certain that it is not *Popery*. A Religion so exceedingly corrupt, and so manifestly absurd, and which so directly militates against the plainest Principles of Reason, and common Sense, cannot be *Truth*.

May we hope to find it in this or the other Mode of *Protestantism*? All rational consistent Protestants with one Voice discourage such a Hope, and unitedly refer us from themselves to the *Law*, and the *Testimony*; the sacred Writings of the Old, and New Testament. There, and there only are we sure to find it in absolute Purity, and full Perfection. The Sentiments of all true, and consistent

Protes-

28 DISCOURSE II.

Protestants have never been better, perhaps never so well expressed as by Mr. Chillingworth in his celebrated Definition of the Religion of Protestants. " By the " *Religion of Protestants*, says he, I do not " understand the Doctrine of *Luther*, or " *Calvin*, or *Melancthon*; nor the Confession " of *Augusta*, or *Geneva*; nor the Cate- " chism of *Heidelberg*," and he might have added, nor any other Catechism, " nor the Articles of the Church of En- " gland, no, nor the *Harmony of Protes-* " *tant Confessions*; but that wherein they " all agree, and which they all subscribe " with greater Harmony, as a perfect Rule " of their Faith and Actions, that is the " *BIBLE*. The *BIBLE*, I say, the *BIBLE*, " only is the Religion of Protestants! " Whatsoever else they believe besides it, " and the plain, irrefragable, indubita- " ble Consequences of it, well may " they hold it as a Matter of *Opinion*, but " as Matter of Faith and Religion, nei- " ther can they with Coherence to their " own Grounds believe it themselves, nor " require the Belief of it of others without most

DISCOURSE II. 29

“ most high and most Schismatical Presumption. I for my Part after a long, and I verily believe and hope, impartial Search of the true Way to eternal Happiness, do profess plainly that I cannot find any Rest for the Sole of my Foot, but upon this Rock only. I see plainly and with my own Eyes, that there are Popes against Popes, Councils against Councils, some Fathers against others, the same Fathers against themselves, a Consent of Fathers of one Age against a Consent of Fathers of another Age, the Church of one Age against the Church of another Age. Traditive Interpretations of Scripture are pretended, but there are few or none to be found. No Tradition but only of Scripture can derive itself from the Fountain, but may be plainly proved, either to have been brought in, in such an Age after Christ; or that in such an Age, it was not in. In a Word, there is no sufficient Certainty but of Scripture only for any considering Man to build upon. This therefore, and this only I have Reason

30 DISCOURSE II.

" son to believe. *This I will profess, according to this I will live, and for this, if there be Occasion, I will not only willingly, but even gladly lose my Life,* though I should be sorry that *Christians* should take it from me. I am fully persuaded that God *does not*, and that Men *ought not* to require any more of any Man than this; *to believe the Scripture to be God's Word, to endeavour to find the true Sense of it, and to live according to it.*" Now if the BIBLE is the Religion, the *only Religion of Protestants*; if the sacred Writings, and they *only* contain the *Christian Doctrine* in *absolute Purity, and full Perfection*; we have already obtained a *general*, and upon the whole, a *very satisfactory Answer to the Question, what is Truth? What is Christianity?*

But here another Question naturally arises; what is the *true Sense of Scripture?* or which is the *sound and Orthodox Interpretation of it?* For *Protestants*, even the most rational and *consistent*, whilst they agree in asserting the *Sufficiency, and complete Perfection of Scripture as a Rule both*

DISCOURSE II. 31

both of Christian Faith, and Christian Practice, yet *differ* very widely in their *Explications* of it.

Now amidst so *many* and *various* Interpretations, *what is Truth?* Or which is the true Sense of Scripture? No Man upon Earth, I apprehend, can *infallibly* determine. However, this ought to give no Degree of Pain to any *honest* Inquirer after Christian Knowledge. For though it is morally impossible, that any Man should know with indubitable Certainty in *all* Cases that this or the other Explication of the sacred Writings is the true One, yet *Integrity*, or an honest well disposed Mind is a sure *infallible* Guide to all *necessary* Truth; or abundantly sufficient to make any Man wise, through the Faith of Christ, so far as is requisite to his Salvation *.

A Man, that is possessed of the utmost *Integrity*, must not expect, in this State of Imperfection, to attain a distinct and *per-*

* "No Man hath a Right to determine at all for others; nor can any Man determine *infallibly* either for others or himself; yet every sincere and impartial Inquirer after Truth may determine for *bimself* with a sufficient *Degree of Evidence.*"

fect

32 DISCOURSE II.

fect Knowledge of the Christian Doctrine in all its Parts, nor is such a one effectually secured against all Liableness to *err*. All that he can rationally propose to himself is to avoid every Error, that is of *dangerous* and *fatal* Consequence; and to acquire such a Measure of Acquaintance with the Gospel of Christ, as shall render it, in all Points of great and *essential* Moment, a competent Rule both of Faith and Practice.

It being of real, and *considerable* Importance to the *Peace* and *Comfort* of every honest and impartial Inquirer after *Christian Knowledge*, or the *true Sense* of Scripture, to be assured of succeeding, so far as is *essentially necessary*: I therefore propose particularly to *prove*, that *Integrity* will *infallibly* guide him to the Knowledge of all *necessary Truths*; and also *effectually* secure him against *all Dangerous Errors*: And then conclude with some suitable *Inferences* from the Doctrine advanced.

That *Integrity*, or an honest well-disposed Mind is a certain, infallible Guide, to all the Truths of Revelation *essentially necessary*

DISCOURSE II. 33

necessary to be known; and an effectual Guard against all dangerous Errors, might be very satisfactorily proved.

First, From the *Perispicuity* of the sacred Writings. That they are *plain* and intelligible to every one sincerely disposed to understand them, might be most naturally inferred from the Character they sustain as a *divine Revelation*.
“ If God gives any Revelation at all, the common Sense of Mankind determines that it must, in all essential and important Branches of it, be a *plain* and *easy* Rule; *obvious* to the Capacities of *all* for whose Benefit it is designed. The contrary Supposition is a most *palpable* Absurdity, *unworthy* of God, and *dishonourable* to his Perfections.” Were the sacred Writings obscure and unintelligible, or needed another Revelation to explain them, they would in Reality be *useless*, and the very End, for which they were given, would be *defeated*: A Supposition utterly irreconcileable with the *Wisdom* of God.

D Admitting

34 DISCOURSE II.

Admitting therefore that the Scriptures are of divine Original, it necessarily follows, that, in all important Points, they are *sufficiently intelligible*. To the Truth of this we meet with repeated Attestations in the Scriptures themselves. *The Commandment of the Lord is pure enlightening the Eyes; the Testimony of the Lord is sure making wise the SIMPLE.* A similar Testimony we find in the Apostle Paul's second Epistle to Timothy. *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness: That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works.* And in the Verse immediately preceding he had said concerning the holy Scriptures, that they were *able to make him wise unto Salvation;* and that he had actually *known them even from a Child.* Such was the *Perspicuity* of the Scriptures of the *Old Testament.* They were level to the Capacities of the most *simple; plain and intelligible even to Children.*

“ And with Respect to the *New Testament,*
“ as it is confessedly the *best and most perfect*
“ *fect*

DISCOURSE II. 35

"*fect* Revelation of the divine Will, it
"cannot be reasonably supposed; but it is
"also the *clearest*, and most *intelligible*; or
"that the Character of being *profitable* for
"*Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for*
"*Instruction in Righteousness*, do not be-
"long to it in a *higher Degree*, than they
"did to a *preparatory Revelation of inferior*
"*Consequence, and more limited Extent.*"

Tis not indeed to be imagined, that the *christian* Revelation is not liable, in some Places, to be *misinterpreted*, or that in all its Parts it is *equally clear*. With respect to the Epistles of the Apostle *Paul*, in particular, we are expressly told, even by one of the most eminent of his Fellow Apostles, that *in them* there are some *Things dark, and hard to be understood*; and which the unlearned and unstable are too apt to *pervert, and abuse*.

But whatever Obscurity may attend some particular Parts of the *christian* Revelation, yet its great and *superior Perspicuity, in general*, is not to be questioned. The Idea, which we are to form of it in this Respect, may be partly learned from the

D 2 Descrip-

36 DISCOURSE II.

Description given of it by some of the *ancient Prophets*. Such is the Perspicuity of the *Christian Revelation* in *all essential Points*, that the Prophet *Isaiah*, when setting forth the superior Privileges of *Gospel Times*, speaks emphatically of *Christians, in general*, as Persons *taught of God*. And elsewhere speaking of the Way of Life and Holiness under the Christian Dispensation, he styles it a *Highway*, a Way so plain, and so distinctly pointed out, *that Wayfaring Men though Fools should not err therein*.

The Perspicuity of the Christian Doctrine might be further argued from the great *Similarity*, and *prevailing Uniformity* of Sentiments appearing among Christians in general, who assert the Perfection of Scripture, and *professedly* make it the *Rule of their Faith*.

In Order to view this Point in a true Light, a Man must be divested of all Prejudice and Bigotry, actuated by no Party Spirit, zealous only for the Honour of Christianity, and ambitious of being distinguished by no other Title than that of

a CHRIS-

DISCOURSE II. 37

a CHRISTIAN. A Man of this happy Temperament will be able to perceive, that many, if not *most* of the Differences subsisting among *Protestants*, consist only in *Words*: He will find that most of those *absurd Opinions*, which in the Heat of Controversy they charge each other with entertaining, are in Reality held by none of them: He will often see, that where they most egregiously mistake each other's Meaning, they understand with equal and perfect Clearness the Sense of Scripture, the *common Standard of their Faith*: He will have the Satisfaction to find that the Points, wherein they agree, greatly exceed, both in Number and Importance, those wherein they differ; and upon the whole that they resemble each other, as much in *Mode of Faith*, as in the *Form* and *Make* of their *Faces*; and consequently be able, from the *prevailing Uniformity* of their Sentiments, notwithstanding all *apparent* or *real* Differences, to draw a good Argument for the *Perpicuity* of their *common Christianity*.

D 3

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38 DISCOURSE II.

The same Thing might be further proved from the Conduct of the Romish Clergy, in prohibiting the *free Use* of the sacred Scriptures to the common People, and in concealing the Knowledge of them, as much as possible, from all.

This they indeed pretend to do, to prevent the Rise and Spread of Heresies, and dangerous Errors, the natural Consequences as they alledge, of permitting the *free and general Perusal* of Writings, that are in themselves so difficult to be understood, and so far above the Comprehension of vulgar Capacities. But in Reality the Consequences, which they chiefly dread, and are most solicitous to guard against, are such as may be reasonably expected to arise, not from the Obscurity of Scripture, but from its being so easy to be understood. The real Danger, which they apprehend, and have just Reason to apprehend, from the free Perusal of the sacred Writings, is not that thereby Men will be led into Errors, but on the contrary become too intelligent and too well acquainted with Truth. “ The Fundamental

DISCOURSE II. 39

"damental Maxim of their Religion, upon which the whole Structure of it is supported, is, that *Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion*, and that it is dangerous for the People to *know too much*". Having established an antichristian Tyranny over the Consciences of Men, and formed Schemes of Doctrine inconsistent with the whole Design and Tenor of Revelation, they have found it necessary to shelter themselves under the Covert of Darkness and Ignorance, and to prevent Men under the severest Penalties, from consulting the Scriptures; being sensible from its great Perspicuity, that a free and universal Recourse to it would enable Men in general to discover the Falsehood, and Fraud of their Impositions, and put them upon asserting their *Christian Liberty*, and *Independence*.

But not to multiply any more Arguments in Proof of what is in itself so evident; the Perspicuity of the sacred Writings Protants, in general, and of every Denomination, agree to assert, how much soever they may differ in other Respects. That

40 DISCOURSE II.

the holy Scripture is plain and intelligible to every one, that peruses it with an honest well-disposed Mind, in all Things essentially necessary to be known, is a Principle that lies at the very Foundation of Protestantism, and Protestants in general are under the Necessity of maintaining it most strenuously, when put upon *vindicating* their *Dissent* from the *Romish* Community.

Tis true they have sometimes deviated from it, and shewn themselves to be greatly inconsistent, when, under the Pretext of guarding against Error, and preventing Diversity of Opinions, they have thought it expedient to set up their own *Explications* of Scripture as *Tests* and *Standards* of *Orthodoxy*. But as often as they have been attacked by the common Enemy, so often they have been convinced of their Folly, and obliged to stand up, one and all, for the Perspicuity of Scripture, and its entire Sufficiency, independent of all *human Explications*, to guide every Man, that honestly and impartially consults it, to a competent Knowledge of true, and genuine

DISCOURSE II. 41

ine Christianity. Now if the Scriptures are thus plain and intelligible to every honest, upright Mind, intelligible in all Things essentially requisite to be understood, it necessarily follows that Integrity is a safe and sufficient Guide to Christian Truth, and Orthodoxy, and an effectual Guard against every great and dangerous Error. But

Secondly, In further Confirmation of this most important Point, I shall have Recourse to the Testimony, the highest of all Testimonies, even that of the illustrious Author of our Religion, and the common Lord of Christians.

To this he bears Witness, by generously disdaining all *implicit* Faith in his Followers, and constantly addressing himself to the Reason and Understanding of Men; by establishing the Right of private Judgment, calling upon every Man to *judge of himself what is Right*; and declaring that *if any Man will do the Will of God, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God*; and that those who *saw not, yet had Eyes to see*; and by commanding his Disciples in

Matters

42 DISCOURSE II.

Matters of Faith and Conscience, to call no Man whatever their Master, and expressly prohibiting all his Disciples, however eminent in Rank, Knowledge, or Piety, from exercising any Dominion and Authority over the Faith and Conscience of their *Brethren*. From all this it necessarily follows, that every Man's own Understanding, in Conjunction with Integrity, is a sufficient and infallible Guide to the Knowledge of the Christian Doctrine, at least so far as it is essentially requisite to be known.

The same Thing might be further evinced from the grand and fundamental Charge which our Lord exhibited against those, who would not receive his Religion, and were not profited by his Doctrine; which was no other than their *wanting Integrity*, and a Mind *well-disposed*. These People's *Heart* is waxed gross, and their Ears are dull of hearing, and their Eyes *t_bey have closed*; *lest* at any Time they should see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and should understand with their Hearts, and should be converted,
and

DISCOURSE II. 43

and I should heal them. They did not disbelieve the Truths proposed to their Attention, because they were not recommended with sufficient Evidence, nor continued ignorant of the Sense of them, because they were not sufficiently intelligible; but because they loved Darkness rather than Light; or were actuated, as the Apostle expresses it, by a wicked Heart of Unbelief.

Again, it is evident, that Integrity is an infallible Guide to Christian Knowledge, in all its essential and most important Parts, from our Saviour's mentioning an honest and good Heart, as the only essentially requisite Qualification, in Order to any Man's becoming a complete Christian. That on the good Ground are they who in a good and honest Heart, having heard the Word, keep it; and according to another Evangelist, understand it, and bring forth Fruit with Patience, and to Perfection.

Thirdly, Another Argument to the same Purpose might be grounded upon the peculiar Regard, which God is represented to have, in the holy Scriptures, to all upright and well-disposed Minds. The meek and bumble

44 DISCOURSE II.

bumble he hath promised to guide in Judgment, and to teach his Way. To them, that are good in his Sight, he giveth Wisdom and Knowledge. No good Thing will be withhold from them, that walk uprightly. But

Fourthly, The same Point may be irrefragably proved from the Scripture Account of Heresy. "Heresy, in the New Testament, is most commonly used in an indifferent Sense, and but seldom in a bad one. It, generally, signifies no more than a Sect or Party in Religion. Thus we read of the Sect or Heresy, of the Sadducees; of the Sect or Heresy of the Pharisees; and St. Paul is styled a Ringleader of the Sect, or HERESY, of the Nazarenes, or CHRISTIANS; and he says of himself, that after the strictest Sect, where the same Greek Word is used, of the Jewish Religion, he lived a Pharisee. In this last Passage, particularly, nothing can be more plain than that the Word has an innocent Meaning; since the Apostle rather commends, than charges himself with any Thing criminal, for having been a Pharisee before his

DISCOURSE II. 45

“ his Conversion to the Christian Faith.
“ And we find it applied in the same
“ Manner, *Acts 28. 22.* where, upon St.
“ Paul’s coming to *Rome*, we are told
“ that the *Jews*, who inhabited there,
“ desired to hear his Thoughts of Christi-
“ anity, and what he had to offer in De-
“ fence of it; for, say they, *as concern-*
“ *ing this Sect, or Heresy, we know that*
“ *every where it is spoken against.* Now,
“ according to this Account, the general
“ Notion of a Heretic is no more than
“ this, *viz.* one that sets up to be the
“ Head, or *chuses* to join himself to a par-
“ ticular religious Sect.

“ But used in a *bad* Sense a Heretic
“ always implies a *bad Character*, and is
“ one, who *knowingly*, espouses a *false*
“ *Doctrine*, is *insincere* in his Profession, and
“ asserts and defends what, he is *convinced*,
“ is contrary to Truth, and consequently
“ one, who maintains and supports the
“ Interest of a Faction, to serve some base
“ Designs: One, as the Apostle expressly
“ defines him, who *sinneth*, acts in direct

“ Oppo-

46 DISCOURSE II.

“ Opposition to the Light of his own Mind,
“ and is condemned of himself.

“ Hence it follows that no mere Error
“ of the Judgment can be *Heresy*, as it
“ necessarily implies a *wicked* and *depraved*
“ Mind; and that an honest Man is
“ utterly incapable of being a *Heretic* in
“ a *bad*, or *any criminal* Sense. He may
“ indeed have *Errors*, and who is there
“ who has not, but his Mistakes cannot
“ be *dangerous*, while he takes Care to
“ maintain a good Conscience.” His
Faith *cannot* be *essentially wrong*, whose
Heart is the Seat of Uprightness, and
“ whose Life is in the right.”

I shall now conclude with some suitable
Inferences from the Doctrine advanced.

1. If *Integrity* is a *safe* and *sufficient*
Guide to Christian Knowledge, and an
effectual Security against all *dangerous* Er-
rors, we may clearly discern the Inutility,
and Insignificancy of an infallible Judge
of religious Controversies to guide and re-
gulate the Faith of others; as well as of
all religious Synods and Councils to deter-
mine, by a Majority of Voices, *what is*
Truth and Orthodoxy.

2. Hence

DISCOURSE II. 47

2. Hence we may also perceive, as every Man *has*, or *ought* to have, so good and sure a Guide in his own Breast, the great Folly of implicitly submitting one's Faith to the Guidance and Regulation of another.—Another may at least *endeavour* to deceive one, even in Points of essential Moment, but every honest Man may be absolutely certain, that his own *Integrity* never will. Which leads me,

3. To observe that all honest Minds, if not exceedingly wanting to themselves, are in as little Danger of being deceived by any others, as they are of deceiving themselves. All Christians, of *good* and *honest Hearts*, are under the more immediate Direction and Patronage of Heaven; they have *Root* in themselves, and are the *Elect of God*, concerning whom our Saviour has said, *that it is morally impossible to deceive them.*

4. From the Subject we may further see a solid Reason why every honest Christian, whilst open to all rational Conviction, and ready to receive more and better Light, should yet be so far satisfied in

his

48 DISCOURSE II.

his own Mind, and with his *present* Sentiments, as not to give way to any painful Perplexities, and Disquietudes ; and why he should be so far fixed in his Judgment, as not to be liable to be tossed to and fro, and to be carried away with every Wind of Doctrine. It becomes not the honest Man to be either *unstable*, or *disquieted in vain*. Dangerous Errors he is incapable of falling into ; and if ignorant of any Truth of peculiar Importance he may reasonably hope, provided he continue to maintain a good Conscience, *even that in due Time shall be revealed unto him*.

5. Again, from the same Premises Christians may learn to esteem and value their Christian Brethren, of one and the other Denomination, not according to any *Conformity* of their particular Sentiments and Opinions to their *own*; but in direct Proportion to the Proofs they give, in their Life and Conversation, of a *good Heart*, and an *honest Mind* : Or to judge of them, rather by the Fruit they bear, than by any Notions, which they may happen to entertain: To receive, love, and own every one

DISCOURSE II. 49

one as a Christian, who proves the Sincerity of his Profession by a blameless and well-ordered Conversation, how weak soever he may be in the Faith: That is, how erroneous soever he may be supposed to be in Regard to speculative Matters; and how greatly soever he may happen to differ in Judgment from the more popular, and more commonly received Opinions. *Him that is weak in the Faith receive you, but not to doubtful Disputations:* “not respecting “any Difference in his Thoughts and “Reasonings, from yours.” Receive him, whatever his Notions may happen to be, whether *Lutheran* or *Calvinistical*, or according to any other particular Form: Receive him, not that you may try your Skill in disputing with him, or with any View of proselyting him to your own way of thinking; much less that you may have a better Opportunity to censure and condemn him. In Regard to his Faith no Man, nor any Number of Men has a Right to judge him. One is his Master, and to him only is he responsible. *Who art thou that judgest another Man's Servant? To his own*

E

Master

50 DISCOURSE II.

Master he standeth or falleth. In Matters of Faith every Christian without Exception is, under Christ, an absolute, independent Sovereign. Christians in general are a *royal Priesthood*. The Author and Finisher of their Faith, their only, and common Lord hath made them all *Kings and Priests unto God and his Father*; for which exalted Honour they are bound, with one Heart and Voice, to ascribe unto him *Glory and Dominion for ever and ever*. A Professor of Christianity being, in his *religious Capacity*, a Servant to no Man, but perfectly free and independent, his Fellow Christians are so far from having any Right to judge him with Respect to his Opinions, be they ever so *weak, absurd, or erroneous*, that they are indispensably obliged to conclude concerning him, provided his Conversation be as becometh the Gospel, that he is a Disciple of Christ *indeed*; and to think of and treat him on all Occasions as a *Christian Brother*. Be not deceived yourselves, neither aim to deceive any others; no Truth whatever is more certain than that *every one, who doth*

Righte-

DISCOURSE II. 51

Righteousness, is righteous; even as God is righteous. A good Tree cannot bring forth evil Fruit; neither can a corrupt Tree, while it is corrupt, bring forth good Fruit. Therefore by their Fruit, and their Fruit only, ye shall know Men, and are to form an Estimate of their Worth and Character.

Truly noble, perfectly Christian, and most highly worthy of universal Imitation, was the Temper expressed by a great Author, already quoted; when he said; “ I will take no Man’s Liberty of Judgment from him; neither shall any Man take mine from me. I will think no Man the worse Man, nor the worse Christian; I will love no Man the less, for differing in Opinion from me: And what Measure I mete to others, I expect from them again.”

Finally, from what has been said, we may clearly see the noble Encouragement that all upright well-disposed Minds have to study the Scripture, and to hope for all desirable Success to crown their honest and impartial Researches. Search the Scriptures;

52 DISCOURSE II.

*tures, for they, and they only, testify of
CHRIST.*

To close the whole; let us, at all Events,
hold fast our Integrity, till we all come, in
the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge
of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto
the measure of the Stature of the Fulness
of Christ.

D I S-

DISCOURSE III.

Christ an Honour to his Followers.



I P E T E R II. 7.

Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious.

O R, according to the *Original*, and the Sense in which I intend at present to consider the Words:

*Unto you therefore who believe, he is an HONOUR *.*

One very proper Method, I apprehend, to subserve the Interest of Religion and Virtue, is to cultivate in our Minds a lively Sense of *Honour*, carefully to cherish every *laudable Ambition*, and a *becoming* Regard to our own *Reputation*. We are frequently called upon, in the sacred

* The Greek Word, which our Translators have here rendered *precious*, is *τιμὴν*, and properly signifies *Honour*.

54 DISCOURSE III.

Writings, to shew ourselves Men; to retain upon our Minds a proper Sense of the *Dignity of human Nature*, and to be careful in every Instance to act up to it. We are also as frequently reminded of the *peculiar Dignity of the Christian Character*, and addressed in Reference to it with such exhortations as these; *only let your Conversation be as it becometh the Gospel. Walk worthy of the Vocation, wherewith you are called, Put on as the ELECT OF GOD, HOLY, AND BELOVED of him, every Grace and Virtue; and above all Things put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness:* And under a deep and lively Sense of your exalted Privileges, and the peculiarly near and honourable relation, in which you stand to God as *Christians, continue in the Faith rooted and grounded; and be not moved away from the Hope of the Gospel.*

The distinguished *Dignity* of our *Character* as *Christians*, I propose at present particularly to consider; and to this I am naturally led by the Words of the Text. *Unto you therefore who believe, He, namely CHRIST, is an HONOUR.*

That

DISCOURSE III. 55

That we may enter more thoroughly into the Spirit and Design of the Text, and discern more clearly the Force, and Propriety of the Apostle's Reasoning, it will be of some Importance to observe, that, at *the Time* he wrote, to be a Christian was, in the general Estimation, or according to the prevailing Opinion of Mankind, the *highest Disgrace*.

Some Years before this Epistle was written, the illustrious Founder of Christianity himself had been treated, both by jewish and heathen Rulers, as the *vilest Malefactor*, and put to the most *ignominious Death*; and now such as had assumed the Character of his *Disciples*, and *Followers*, and made *Profession* of his Religion, were Objects of *general Contempt*. They were reckoned as the *Filth of the World*, and the *offscouring of all Things*, and every where spoken against. And lest the Christians should *sink* under the enormous Weight of Reproach, and Obloquy, with which they were loaded, the Apostle, in the Text and Context, presents them with

E 4 a Variety

56 DISCOURSE III.

a Variety of Considerations to support and animate them.

With Respect to the Founder of their Faith, he reminds them that, though he had been *despised, and rejected of Men*, yet in *himself*, and in the Estimation of GOD he was *exceedingly honourable*. The fourth Verse of this Chapter; *to whom coming as unto a living Stone, disallowed or rejected, indeed of Men, but chosen of GOD, and precious.*

In the next Verse he represents, in bold and striking Figures the singular Felicity of their own Condition, and the *distinguished Honour*, to which they had been, in Reality, exalted, notwithstanding the contemptuous and injurious Treatment they met with from weak and wicked Men, in Consequence of their having embraced Christianity, and by Virtue of the Relation, in which they stood to *Christ*, as his Disciples. *Ye also as lively, or living, Stones are built up a spiritual House, an holy Priesthood, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

In the

DISCOURSE III. 57

In the sixth Verse he proceeds to shew that what, he had said, was not only true in itself, but also conformable to antient Prophecy. *Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, behold, I lay in Sion a chief Corner Stone, elect, precious, excellent and honourable ; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded, or ashamed ; but, as is manifestly implied, exalted to Honour.* Then follow the Words of the Text, as an Inference from the whole. *To you therefore who believe, he is an HONOUR.* In endeavouring farther to improve the Subject, I shall

I. Mention a Variety of Instances in Regard to which, it may be most truly and properly said that *Christ Jesus*, the Author of our Religion, is to all genuine Christians a real and distinguished HONOUR. And

II. Then conclude with some suitable Inferences.

I. I propose to mention a Variety of Instances, in Regard to which, it may be most truly and properly said, that *Christ Jesus*, the Author and Finisher of the Christian

58 DISCOURSE III.

stian Faith, is to all genuine Christians a real and distinguished HONOUR. This he may be said to be.

i. In Regard to the transcendent *Dignity* of his *Person*, and the infinite Importance of the *Office*, which he sustains and executes for the general Good of Men, In those sacred Scriptures, *which testify of him*, and from which alone we can form any Idea concerning him, he is spoken of in peculiarly honourable and exalted Terms: as the *Logos*, or *Word*; *who, in the Beginning, was with God*; the *Word, by whom God made the Worlds, and without whom nothing was made, that was made*. We are there taught to conceive of him, as the **ONLY** begotten Son of God, “ the Son of “ God in such a superior Sense, as cannot “ be affirmed of any created Being what- “ soever; as being by nature and before “ all Worlds, in the *Form of God, the ex-* “ *press Image of his Person, and the bright* “ *Representation of his Glory:**” The only perfect *Image* of the all perfect and invisible God. As having been *always* with the

* Vide Dr. Chandler's Sermons.

DISCOURSE III. 59

Father, deriving his Being immediately from him; and possessing every communicable Attribute of Deity. He is set forth as † the Head, and Beginning of the Creation of God; † the First-born of every Creature; and as having in all Things the Pre-eminence.

He is further spoken of, as the Word made Flesh; Emmanuel, God with us: The one and only Mediator between God and Man: The Saviour of the World; the Author of eternal Salvation to all them who obey him: As having all Authority given him; exalted to the Right-Hand of God, far above all Principality and Power; appointed to be the

† All Creatures throughout the Universe are represented as deriving their Being immediately from Christ. By him, namely Christ, were all Things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, &c. All Things were made by him. By him God made the Worlds; all Worlds.

† The first born of every Creature. Πρωτότοκος πάσοντος κτίσματος, the First-begotten, brought into the World by the Father before all Ages; before the whole Creation. Tis observable that the Apostle Paul does not here call our Saviour, οὐ πρωτότοκος πάσοντος κτίσματος, the first created of all Creatures, but οὐ πρωτότοκος πάσοντος κτίσματος, the First-begotten of every Creature, the First-begotten before all Creatures; begotten before any C R E A T U R E had a Being. That the Word begotten or generated, as applied to Christ, has a Sense superior and different from created seems very evident; but what it properly and literally implies, this the Scripture hath no where revealed or explained, Vid. Dr. Clark in loc.

Judge

ble

60 DISCOURSE III.

Judge of the quick and the dead; and the Head over all Things to the Church.

How justly then might the Apostle say, that to all ; who truly believe, he is an Honour? How far does he excel in Dignity all other Teachers of Religion? *God, who at sundry Times, and in divers Manners spake in Time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these laſt Days spoken unto us by his SON; whom he hath appointed Heir of all Things.* Further,

2. Christ Jesus may be said to be a real and distinguished Honour to all true Christians. In Regard to the unrivalled Perfection of the Religion, of which he is the Author. The matchless Perfection, and superlative Excellence of his Religion will appear, whether we consider its *Doctrines* and *Precepts*; or the *Motives*, and *Arguments*, with which it enforces and recommends them.

In the Christian Religion our *whole Duty* is *clearly explained*; we are there taught the most rational, and becoming Temper and Behaviour, in Relation to God, our Fellow Creatures, and ourselves. It advances

DISCOURSE III. 61

vances the most just and worthy Notions of the divine Being, teaches us to conceive of him, as *the one only living and true God*, all perfect, and all-glorious; the *Father*, and *Friend* of universal Nature; the great original and Fountain of all Being, Perfection, and Happiness; having *no Respect of Persons*; but ever present with, and extending his tender Mercies over *all his Works*. In a Word, the Representation, which Christianity gives of God, is perfectly conformable to, and consistent with, the purest and sublimest Dictates of Reason, and *infinitely lovely*. And as to the *Worship* it requires us to pay him, it is the *Homage of the Heart*; the Tribute of a good and upright Mind, actuated by a becoming, and lively *Sense* of God, and the various, important, and interesting Relations, in which he stands towards us, as the *Author* and Preserver of our Frame, the Father of our Mercies, our supreme and rightful Sovereign, and the sole Arbiter of our Lot.

“ A *Worship* not encumbered with ritual and ceremonial Observances, not consisting “ in external Pomp and Pageantry, but in
the

62 DISCOURSE III.

" the Cultivation and Expression of all
" those Dispositions and Affections towards
" God, which are correspondent to his Na-
" ture and Character, and the State in
" which he has placed us." In the Gos-
pel the *whole World* is represented as the
Temple of God, and they alone character-
ized as his *true* and *acceptable* Worshippers,
who worship him in Spirit, and in Truth.
That Piety, which Christianity recom-
mends is *real* and *unaffected*, in all its Parts
a reasonable Service, " equally conform-
" able to the Nature of God, and the
" Character and Condition of Man."

And with Respect to ourselves, the
whole, in short, that it requires of us, is
to *shew ourselves Men*; to keep our *Reason*
on the *Throne*, and the *inferior* and *meaner*
Faculties in due Subjection to the *higher*
and *nobler* Powers of our Natures. It pre-
scribes no Kind of *Mortification*, or *Selfde-
nial*, but such as every Man's own Reason,
and Conscience must entirely approve, and
such as every one *duly* attentive to his *pre-
sent Interest*, and *temporal Happiness* would
in general be led to practise.

And

DISCOURSE III. 63

And with Regard to our Fellow Creatures, the Religion of Jesus may be justly and emphatically styled the *Religion of LOVE.* The whole Law, with Respect to relative Duties, is represented by Christ as being fulfilled in one *Word*, even this; *thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself.* The End of the Commandment is CHARITY. One great and obvious Design of genuine Christianity is to advance the common Good; or to promote the general Happiness of the World, to establish that most useful and amiable of all Principles *undissembled, disinterested, and unconfined BENEVOLENCE.* A Principle which tends above all others to exalt and adorn our Natures, and in the Exercise of which consists the nearest, and most striking Resemblance, we are capable of attaining, to that great and glorious Being, in whom all possible Perfections and Excellencies dwell. Now, if this Representation of the Christian Doctrine be just, we have solid Reason to pronounce concerning the Author of our Religion, that to them that believe, he is an HONOUR.

That

64 DISCOURSE III.

That the Account here given of the Reasonableness, Perfection, and beneficial Tendency of the several Doctrines, which Christianity teaches, is just and fair, and in no Degree exaggerated, might be very satisfactorily proved from the Testimony delivered concerning it by one of its principal and most formidable Adversaries. According to the Representation, which he has been pleased to make of the Religion of Christ; it is a *most amiable* and *most useful* Institution, whose *natural Tendency* is directed to promote the *Peace and Happiness of Mankind*. It contains *all the Duties of natural Religion*, and teaches them in the *most plain and simple Manner*. It is one *continued Lesson of the strictest Morality, of Justice, of Benevolence, and of universal Charity*. He therefore particularly admires the political Views of Constantine in the Establishment of it, which as he represents them, were to soften the Ferocity of the Armies, to reform the Licentiousness of the Provinces; and by infusing a Spirit of Moderation and Submission to Government, to extinguish those *Principles of Avarice*.

DISCOURSE III. 65

Avarice and Ambition, of Injustice and Violence, by which so many Factions were formed, and the Peace of the Empire so often, and so fatally broken. He then declares, that *no Religion* was ever so well proportioned, nor so well directed, as that of *Christianity* seemed to be, to all these Purposes. He acknowledges, that considered in its original Simplicity, it was a *most simple and intelligible Rule of Belief, Worship, and Practice*: That the *Theology contained in the Gospel is marvellous but plain*; and that the *System there taught is a complete System, to all the Purposes of Religion natural and revealed*. He says, that supposing Christianity to have been an human Invention, it had been the most amiable, and the most useful Invention, that was ever imposed on Mankind for their Good. And with Respect to its positive Institutions, *viz.* Baptism and the Lord's Supper, he declares that they are not only innocent but profitable, because they are extremely proper to keep up the Spirit of true Religion, by keeping up that of Christianity, and to promote the Observation of moral Duties, by

66 DISCOURSE III.

maintaining a Respect for the Revelation which confirmed them. Finally, he says, that its Simplicity and Plainness shewed, that it was designed to be the Religion of Mankind, and manifested likewise *the Divinity of its Original*.

Such was sometimes the Language of one of the most celebrated Geniuses, and ablest Writers, that ever appeared in the Cause of Infidelity. How a Person, who had spoken so highly in Praise of Christianity, should, notwithstanding, employ all his Talents, and exert his utmost Efforts to invalidate its Evidences, and to weaken its Credit and Influence, is perhaps *unaccountable*, however this is clear,
“ that there must be something transcendently beautiful and excellent in the Christian Religion, considered in its original Purity and Simplicity, which could force *such Acknowledgments* from a Person so strongly prejudiced against it;” * and that it is greatly to the Honour of Christians, as well as a Proof of real Wisdom, that they have embraced it, and

* Vid. Dr. Leland’s View of Lord Bolingbroke’s Writings.

make

DISCOURSE III. 67

make Profession of it. It was not without Reason the great Apostle of the Gentiles said, that *he was not ashamed of the GOSPEL*; and that he counted all Things but Loss, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of *Christ Jesus* the Lord.

Again; alike excellent and equally worthy of Esteem are the several *Motives*, with which a Conformity to the Christian Doctrines is enforced and recommended. It is a distinguished and *peculiar Excellence* of Christianity, that it gives to all its genuine and honest Professors, *positive Assurance* of divine *Approbation* and *Favour*, representing them as offering spiritual Sacrifices, which, by Christ Jesus, are *acceptable to God*. It also *expressly promises* them *sufficient Grace*, and *every needful Aid*. And finally, it affords them a *clear and certain Evidence* of an infinitely glorious and blessed *Immortality*, as the *Reward* and *Consequence* of their *patient Continuance*, and unwearied Diligence in *well-doing*.

Thus; in every View of it, is the Religion of *Jesus* most eminently calculated to befriend the Interest of Virtue and true

68 DISCOURSE III.

Piety, and to promote the Peace, Comfort, and Happiness of Mankind. And thus, from its superior Perfection and Excellence, it evidently appears, that its genuine Professors have abundant Cause to *exult* in their Relation to its Founder, and ever to regard him, as one, who reflects upon them the most *real* and *distinguished* HONOUR. *Unto you therefore that believe be is an Honour.*

D I S.

DISCOURSE IV.

Christ an Honour to his Followers; and the most illustrious Patron of religious Liberty.



I P E T E R II. 7.

Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious.

OR, according to the *Original*, and the Sense in which I intend at present to consider the Words;

Unto you therefore who believe, he is an HONOUR.

In a former Discourse upon these Words I proposed

I. To shew, from a Variety of Considerations, that *Christ Jesus*, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, is to all genuine Christians a real and distinguished Honour. And

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II. Then

70 DISCOURSE IV.

II. Then conclude with some suitable Inferences.

That *Christ Jesus* is to all genuine Christians a real and distinguished *Honor*, was then evinced,

1. From the transcendent *Dignity* of his Person; and the infinite *Importance* of the *Office*, which he sustains and executes for the general Good of Men. And

2. From the unrivalled Perfection, and superlative Excellence of his *Religion*.

I shall now proceed to prove the same Point.

3. From the matchless Purity and Perfection of his *Life* and *Manners*.

It was a distinguishing Characteristic of our blessed Lord, that he knew no Sin, and fulfilled all Righteousness. Christians have peculiar Cause to triumph, as the Author of their Religion was the *only perfect* Character that ever adorned *Humanity*. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and entirely separate from Sinners. It has indeed been suggested, by such as were disposed to lessen his Reputation, that what

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DISCOURSE IV. 71

the Historians of his Life intended to signify by representing him as *perfect* and *without Sin*, “ was not that he was *really* and *absolutely sinless*; but that no *public* or *gross* Miscarriage could be charged upon him.”

But, that this Suggestion is false and groundless, might be most clearly and sufficiently proved, from what is said by the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. *Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners; who NEEDETH NOT, as those High Priests, under the mosaic Dispensation, to offer up Sacrifice for HIS OWN SINS.*

To the sinless and unblemished Character of Christ we have a Cloud of Witnesses. His most inveterate and bitterest Enemies could prove nothing against him, but that he had declared himself to be, what in Reality he was, the *Son of God*, and the *true Messiah*. And his *unrighteous*, and *temporizing* Judge, though prevailed upon by the Malice and Importance of his Adversaries to pass a Sentence of Condemnation upon him, was obliged to pro-

72 DISCOURSE IV.

nounce him a *just Person*, and that he had found in him *no Fault at all*.

Another Evidence of singular Moment, and which merits particular Attention, in the present Case, is that of *Judas*, not only as it was given by an Enemy, but also one, whom our Lord had admitted into the most intimate Acquaintance, and Familiarity with himself, and who therefore had had sufficient Opportunities to observe his Designs and Views; and to form the most perfect Judgment of his Life and Conduct. This Man, after he had, from a Spirit of Resentment, and the Lust of Gain, most basely betrayed him into the Hands of his Enemies, when he came to reflect coolly on what he had done, was struck with such Horror and Perturbation of Mind, that he *returns the Wages of his Iniquity*, makes the most full and explicit Confession of his own atrocious Guilt, and gives an *open* and most *solemn Attestation* to our Lord's *Innocence*; and when he found that all was not sufficient to stop the Prosecution, which had been so unjustly commenced against him,
under

DISCOURSE IV. 73

under an overwhelming, insupportable Sense of his enormous Crime, he puts a violent End to his own Life. Such is the Evidence which Enemies themselves have been obliged to give to our Lord's *blameless*, and *irreproachable* Character.

In this *truly HOLY ONE* Satan himself, the great Enemy of all Goodness, and the grand *Accuser* of Men, could *find nothing*, of which he might accuse HIM.

So perfectly faultless, and illustriously beautiful was the Character of Christ, that GOD is represented as more than once declaring, by a *Voice from Heaven*, that he was *his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased*.

But it may help us to conceive still more clearly and fully what an exalted HONOUR, he reflects upon his genuine Disciples; and the abundant Cause they have to glory in their Relation to him; if we consider his matchless and perfectly amiable Character, a little more *particularly*; and *especially*, the *Pattern*, he hath given both in his Life, and in his Death of the most extensive and disinterested Benevolence.

The

74 DISCOURSE IV.

The Love, the *Benevolence* of Christ Jesus *passeth Knowledge*. In him we view the *most generous FRIEND* of the human Kind. His whole Life bore Witness, that he came into the World, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; not to *please himself*, but to *please others*; not to consult his own Ease, or to prosecute worldly Wealth and Honours; but to labour incessantly, and without Weariness, in relieving the Distresses, and promoting the Happiness of Mankind. He came not to gather Disciples to himself from any Views of Ambition, and worldly Interest. Instead of *seeking* any earthly Honours, he studiously *declined* them. And so far was he from pursuing any temporal Emoluments, that in Order to *enrich* others, he himself became *poor*. He gave invincible Demonstrations, that *his Kingdom was not of this World*; and that his sole Business on Earth was to *do good*; to manifest the utmost Compassion, and Tenderness to the Bodies, and Souls of Men; to instruct them in their Duty, to reclaim them from their Vices, and to conduct them to Virtue and Glory.

DISCOURSE IV. 75

Glory. He went about, publishing to all, that had Ears to hear, *the Things belonging to their Peace*, labouring by all fit and proper Means to turn Men from their Iniquities, and to make them wise unto Salvation; and after exhibiting in his Life a Pattern of the most *diffusive*, and *disinterested* Kindness, he became, in Obedience to him who sent him, and for the further Benefit of Mankind, submissive to the most *ignominious Death*, even the *Death of the Cross*. To the End that every Obstacle in the Way of human Happiness might be effectually removed; and that the Work of our Redemption might be *entirely completed*, he gave his Life a Ransom for all; and tasted Death for every Man.

Now, if there is any Thing truly excellent and praise-worthy in the most extensive Benevolence, and *unexampled* Kindness, then is Christ Jesus to all genuine Christians a real, and highly exalted HONOUR. We follow not a *crafty*, *insidious*, *self-interested* Leader; but a Person of unequalled, unprecedented Goodness; one who knew no Sin,

76 DISCOURSE IV.

Sin, and in whose Mouth there was no Guile. This being the Case, is it not truly honourable to be a Christian? But

4. Christ Jesus reflects great and distinguished HONOUR upon all his Disciples and Followers, as he may be justly considered as the most eminent Patron and Assertor of *religious Liberty*; and the *inalienable Rights of Conscience*, that the World ever knew.

The Religion of Christ is *thorough out a Law of Liberty*; the most perfect Liberty, that any Man, truly disposed to be *religious*, can possibly desire or conceive. It was the professed Intention of Christ to make all his Followers, in all Matters of Religion and Conscience *free indeed*, absolutely independent of all *human Authority and Dominion*. When he made his Appearance in the World, Mankind in general were in a State of *religious Slavery*.

The Jews, indeed, had been favoured in some Respects above all other People, and were, as it might have been reasonably thought, the better guarded against falling into any *spiritual Bondage*, as God had

DISCOURSE IV. 77

had been pleased to give them his *Statutes, and Judgments*; a *written* and more *immediate* Revelation of his Will, for their *common Use, and general Instruction*; yet this great *Privilege*, through the exorbitant Ambition, and artful Management of the public *Ministers* of their Religion, was rendered to a great Degree of *none Effect*. Though God himself had condescended to be their Instructor, and given them a Law, which in all its more *important* and *essential* Parts, was sufficiently *plain* and *intelligible* to all, yet by suffering the public Teachers of it to make *Additions to it*, and arrogantly assume to themselves an *exclusive Right* of *interpreting* it; they became incapable of deriving much Benefit from it, and were led, by natural Consequence, to receive sometimes in the Room of, and, at other Times, in Conjunction with the genuine Doctrines of God, *the Commandments of Men.*

That this was the unhappy Case of the Jews, evidently appears from many, and various Declarations of our blessed Lord. *In vain, says he, do they worship me, teaching*

78 DISCOURSE IV.

ing for Doctrines the Commandments of Men. For laying aside the Commandment of God, ye hold the Tradition of Men, as the washing of Pots and Cups: And many other such like Things ye do. He then adds, full well ye reject the Commandment of God, that ye may keep your own Tradition. Else where he speaks as follows; *Wo unto you ye Lawyers, ye Doctors and Teachers of the Law, for ye lade Men with Burdens grievous to be born.* Such was the spiritual Oppression, and Tyranny, which the Jews in general laboured under.

And as to the Gentiles, their Case, if possible, was still more wretched and deplorable: *Human Invention, and the Authority of Men* were, in a Manner, the only Foundations, that supported their Religion; and the arbitrary Decisions of earthly Rulers, ever in firm and close Alliance with a crafty, ambitious, and domineering Priesthood, the sole Rule of their Faith: But from every Species of spiritual Tyranny, and from all *human Authority* in Matters of *Faith and Religion*, the great and illustrious Founder of Christianity hath
made

DISCOURSE IV. 79

made all his Disciples and Followers, whether among Jews or Gentiles, wholly and eternally free. To all without Exception, who were before in a State of *religious Captivity*, the Gospel of Jesus proclaimed the *most perfect Freedom*.

In Matters of Religion Christ hath appointed for Christians no *earthly Master* whatever. He hath invested them all with *equal Liberty*, made them *all FREE-MEN*. *In the holy Hill of Zion he is the only KING*: He is the *Head over all Things to the Church*. Christians, in general, owe the most ready and *entire Submission* to the *Laws of Christ*, and most *reasonably*, as all his Laws are indeed and in Truth, the *Laws of God*; but with Respect to each other, and to all Men they are in their *religious Capacity perfectly independent*. *Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master even Christ, and ALL YE ARE BRETHREN.* *And call no Man your Father upon the Earth; for one is your Father, who is in Heaven.* *Neither be ye called Masters; for one is your Master, even Christ.* *But he that is greatest among you, shall be your Servant.*

80 DISCOURSE IV.

vant. And whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted. As Christians they were all equal, Servants to no Man, and under Law only to Christ. With Respect to spiritual Authority and Dominion over Christians, Christ is all in all. In these Things the Apostles themselves had no Share; no Part of his regal Dignity, and Power would he confer upon them; and no Part of that Liberty, wherewith he had made his Disciples in general free, would he intrust in their Hands, to be enlarged or abridged at Pleasure. To a Trust so great and precious no mere Man, no not an Apostle of Christ was in any Degree equal. He would not suffer his Apostles, nay expressly forbad them to exercise any Kind of Authority over his Subjects; nor would he permit them to aspire to any Preeminence above their Fellow Christians, but such as they could derive by manifesting superior Fidelity and Diligence, as his, and their Servants. Jesus called them unto him, and said, ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them; and they

DISCOURSE IV. 81

they that are great exercise Authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you. But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant. And in perfect Consistence with all this, we find them afterwards openly declaring, that they were neither *Lords over God's Heritage*, nor had any Dominion over the Faith of Christians. They claimed no Superiority over them, published no Laws whatever for their Observance, but the Laws of Christ only; nor did they dare publish even these in *any Words of their own*, or such as *Man's Wisdom teacheth*, but such as *the holy Ghost teacheth*: Much less did they presume to fix any *Sense of their own* upon them, or to encumber them with any of their own *private and arbitrary Interpretations*. Just as they themselves received them, so they delivered them to others.

Well therefore might they declare that they corrupted not the *Word of God*, neither handled it deceitfully, but as of *Sincerity*, but as of *God*, in the *Sight of God*, spoke they in *Christ*. They preached not them-

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82 DISCOURSE IV.

selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and them-selves the Servants of all, for Jesus sake.

The Laws of Christ, in their own native *Perfection* and *Simplicity*, have been delivered to all the Saints, or to *Christian People in general*, and to all of them, without Distinction, has he given an *equal Right to consult them, to form a Judgment of them and to regulate their Faith and Conduct by them*. This most important and *equal Right* of Christians is asserted in such Terms as these; *Search the Scriptures. Why judge ye not of yourselves what is right. BEWARE, lest any Man spoil you through Philosophy, and vain Deceit, after the Tradition of Men, after the Rudiments of this World, and not after Christ. Let no Man deceive you by any Means.* In Regard to Religion place not an *absolute Confidence, or implicit Trust, in any Man, or in any Number of Men. Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits, whether they be of God. Try, and prove all Things, by the Word of Truth, and the Standard of right Reason, and hold fast that which is good; that which has stood the Test of free Inquiry, and impartial*

DISCOURSE IV. 83

impartial Examination. If there come any unto you, and bring not this Doctrine, the noble Doctrine of Liberty, receive him not. He is a designing, dangerous Man; stand upon your Guard, for he intends to enslave you. If any Man teach otherwise, than is consistent with the Laws of Christ, the perfect Law of Liberty; and would enforce any Doctrines, or authoritatively recommend any Sentiments or Opinions of his own, from such withdraw thyself.

By Mearis of the Gospel all Christians, without Distinction, are represented, in all Things of absolute Importance, as taught of God; and put into a Capacity of becoming their own Instructors, so far as is essentially necessary, both to their present and final Well-being. So that the only fundamental Faith under the Gospel Dispensation; the only Faith, indispensably required of Christians, is Faith in the original and genuine Laws of Christ, and not in any human Explications of them, or in any human Opinions, that are pretended to be grounded upon them. He that believes in Christ is the Lord's Freeman, and responsible

84 D I S C O U R S E IV.

sible to no Man. He is both a *King* and a *Priest unto God*; and needs not depend on any others for any Important Information; or indeed any thing whatever, that is absolutely necessary to his *real Welfare* and *Happiness*. His only *Lord* and *Master* hath taken Care to furnish him with every important *Means of Knowledge*, and to provide for him a *sufficient Guard* against every *pernicious* and *destructive Error*, without submitting his Faith and Conscience to the Guidance and Authority of others. Every Man, that *believes in Christ*, possesses *all Faith*, that is *characteristic of a Christian*, and *necessary to Salvation*.

How much soever a *Believer in Christ* may *differ from other Christian Believers*; or *involuntarily err*; yet, if he *honestly endeavours to live up to his Profession*, he is undoubtedly approved of the common Lord of Christians, and the great Patron and Founder of Christian Liberty; he is without Question in the Road of *Happiness*, has a Title to all the glorious *Privileges of Christianity*, a Right to the Tree of Life, and a well-grounded Hope of entering

DISCOURSE IV. 85

entering in at last through the Gates into the celestial City, the City of the living God, and the final Habitation of all genuine Christians of every Sect, and Denomination under Heaven: *For there is no Difference, the Righteousness of God, which conferreth Pardon, and eternal Life, being now most clearly manifested as a Righteousness, which is, by the Faith of Christ, unto all, and upon all them, that believe; and who out of a pure Conscience, and Faith unfeigned are solicitous to abound in all those Fruits of Righteousness, which through Christ Jesus, are to the Praise, and Glory of God; walking worthy of the Vocation, wherewith they are called, with all lowliness, and Meekness, forbearing one another in Love, endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace; wishing Grace, and abundant Favour to all in every Place, that love the Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity, distinguished Prosperity and Happiness to all that acknowledge the same Master and Lord, the same Author and Finisher of their Faith.*

According to the equitable and impartial Genius, the noble and generous Spirit of

86 DISCOURSE IV.

our holy Religion let us endeavour to form our *whole Temper*: According to the Tenor of that *perfect Law of Liberty*, by which we expect to be *finally judged*, let us now study to regulate our *whole Conversation*; proving by our Benevolence and Candour, our abounding and unlimited Charity, our impartial and unfeigned Love of the Christian Brethren, in all Places of our Lord's Dominion, that the Spirit of *genuine Christianity*, and the *SPIRIT of CHRIST*, wherever it prevails and rules, is a *SPIRIT of LIBERTY*: which, whilst it renders those happy Minds, that have imbibed it, thoroughly *sensible* of their own *Independence*, prevents also their *encroaching*, in any Degree, on the *Rights* of others, and from every Attempt to *entangle them with any Yoke of Bondage*: A Spirit which makes those, who are properly influenced by it, truly desirous, that the Law of Christ may be enjoyed, as a Law of *perfect Liberty*, by *all*; and that the *easy Yoke* of our common Master and Lord may be ever worn with *equal Ease* and Freedom by all, who *profess the Christian Name*. Now if

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DISCOURSE IV. 87

Christ is eminently a *Patron* of religious Liberty, and his *Gospel* a Law of *Liberty*, as above represented, is not *Christ* an Honour to such as truly believe in him? and is it not also highly honourable to be a *Christian Believer*?

4. Again, the Author of our Religion is an Honour to his Followers, considered as a *Conqueror*, who hath *already*, in his own Person, *triumphed* over all the Enemies of their *Salvation*, and *Happiness*; and hath also *promised*, in proper Season, to render them in like Manner completely *victorious*.

He, as the *Captain of our Salvation*, already wears a *Victor's Crown*. Well, therefore, may all real and faithful Christians assume, with the Apostle, this Language of Exultation. *Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ?* Shall *Tribulation*, or *Distress*, or *Persecution*, or *Nakedness*, or *Peril*, or *Sword*? Nay, in all these Things we are more than Conquerors, through him that loved us. No individual Person is certain of coming off *victorious* under any other Commander; but all who enlist

88 DISCOURSE IV.

under the great *Captain of our Salvation*, and intrepidly *fight the good Fight of Faith*, are sure to conquer. Under such a *Leader* the good Christian has no real Cause to fear; but every desirable Encouragement to persevere in his Course, in Spite of all Opposition, till he has attained the Crown of Life. They that believe on him shall not be ashamed, or disappointed of their Hopes, seeing he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him.

5. Further, the Author of the Christian Faith is an **HONOUR** to his Followers, considered as their *Forerunner* to the Realms of Glory.

After overcoming the *World*, abolishing *Death*, and destroying him, who had the Power of Death, that is the Devil, he ascended on high, and passed into the *Heavens*, whither his Followers also, in due Time, may reasonably hope to enter. Blessed Hope! which Hope, says the Apostle, we have as an *Anchor of the Soul*, both sure and stedfast, amidst all the Storms, and Tempests of Life, entering into that within the *Vail*, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even

Jesus.

DISCOURSE IV. 89

Jesus. Let not your Heart be troubled: In my Father's House are many Mansions; I go to prepare a Place for you. And if I go to prepare a Place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.

Had this World been *our all*, it might have been justly pronounced, in the spirited Language of the Psalmist, that Mankind were made in vain: but when we consider ourselves as intended for a future, immortal State; our Being becomes of infinite Importance: The human Character appears with *inexpressible Dignity*, allied to Angels, and crowned with *Glory and Honour* not to be as yet conceived. That there will be an immortal State after this, there is, *positive Assurance* given unto all Men by the Resurrection of *Jesus Christ* from the dead, and his Ascension into Heaven. *Christ Jesus* is the Resurrection and the Life. *As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Our blessed Lord's Re-entrance into Glory is a Ground, and Pledge of our *Exaltation*; *for as he liveth, so we shall live also.* By his Triumph over Death and the Grave, and repossessing himself of the Seats of immortal

90 DISCOURSE IV.

immortal Blis, he was declared to be *the Son of God with Power*; one mighty to save, perfectly capable of fulfilling all his Promises; and in particular the important Promise of *eternal Life*. Therefore in this Respect also the great Founder of Christianity is to them that believe a most distinguished HONOUR.

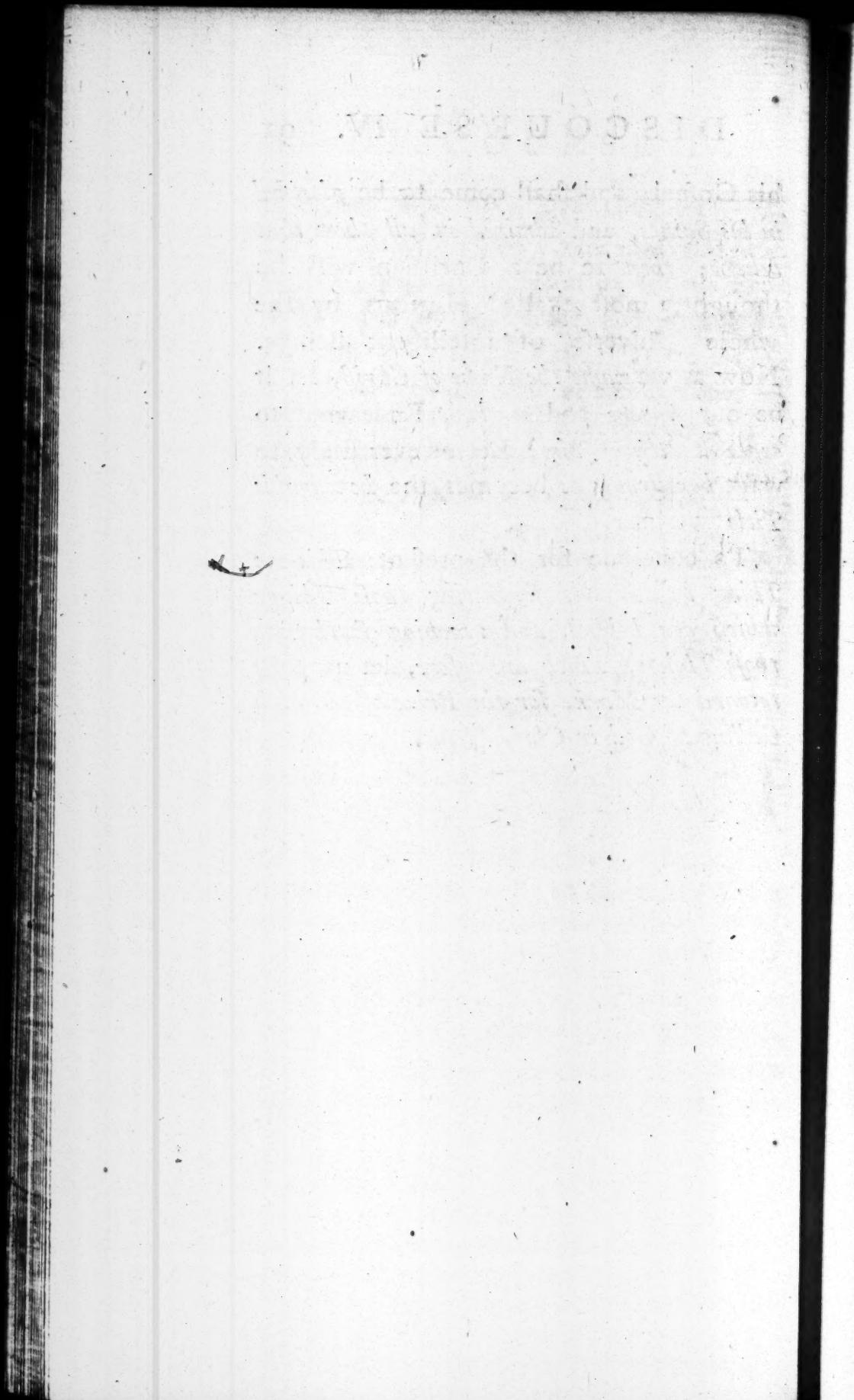
But after all, the *Dignity of real Christians*, by Virtue of their Relation to *Christ*, is known only in Part. The Glory of Christians is a Glory yet to be revealed. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be*; this only we know fully and with absolute Certainty, that when we shall see Christ Jesus himself, *as he is*, we shall be like him. Then the Dignity of the Christian Character will be fully disclosed, *when he, who ascended, shall again descend* in his own Glory, and in the Glory of his Father, and all the holy Angels with him, and shall sit on the Throne of his Glory, and all Nations shall be gathered before him; *When he shall be revealed from Heaven in flaming Fire to take Vengeance on them that know not God and obey not his*

DISCOURSE IV. 91

his Gospel; and shall come to be glorified in his Saints, and admired in all them that believe; then to be a Christian will be thought a most exalted HONOUR by the whole Universe of intelligent Beings. Now as we name the Name of Christ, let it be our sincere and constant Endeavour to walk worthy of him: Let us ever study to walk honourably as becomes the honourable Title we bear.

To conclude for the present: *This one Thing let us do, forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those Things, which are before, let us press toward the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

D I S-



DISCOURSE V.

Christ an Honour to his Followers; and the most illustrious Patron of religious Liberty.



I P E T E R II. 7.

Unto you therefore who believe, he is an HONOUR.

IN the two preceding Discourses on these Words several Considerations were offered, in Order to prove that *Christ Jesus*, to such as truly believe in him; or to all his genuine Disciples and Followers, *is an Honour.*

The peculiar and distinguished Honour he reflects upon his Disciples and Followers was evinced from the transcendent Dignity of his Person, and the infinitely

94 DISCOURSE V.

nitely high and important Office, which he sustains and executes, as Mediator of the new Covenant, the only Mediator between God and Man: From the unrivalled Perfection and useful Tendency of his Religion; from his sinless and irreproachable Life and Manners; and more especially from his unparalleled Benevolence, and unexampled Goodness: The same Point was further proved from his having distinguished himself as the most eminent Patron and Assertor of *religious Liberty*, and the inestimable Rights of Conscience, and his having invested all Christians, in their religious Capacity, with *perfect* and *equal Freedom*, the utmost Freedom that any Man truly disposed to be religious can either wish or conceive: And finally from his having already triumphed, in his own Person, over all the Enemies of their Salvation, and entered as their *Forerunner*, into the Regions of perfect Bliss, and unfading Glory.

I shall now proceed to the *practical Improvement* of the Subject; or to draw some suitable

DISCOURSE V. 95

suitable Inferences from it, and so conclude. And

First, If Christ Jesus is in so many Respects an Honour to Christians, it is their manifest Duty to take great Heed to themselves lest they, in any Instance, *dishonour* him. To this they are bound both in Justice and Gratitude. Christians may be said to *dishonour* Christ, the illustrious Author of their Religion, various Ways. And

First by *leading loose and profligate Lives.* By the wicked and scandalous Lives of Christian Professors an Occasion has been given for one of the most *plausible* and *popular* Objections against the moral and *useful Tendency* of the Christian Religion, and the *divine Pretensions* of its Author. Had the Lives of Christians in *general*, and *at all Times*, been answerable to the holy Rules of Christianity, and conformable to the Spirit and genius of the Gospel, it would never have been questioned, even by its greatest Enemies, whether the Religion of *Jesus* had been of real Benefit to the World, and *conducive*

96 DISCOURSE V.

ducive to the Reformation of Mankind. That genuine Christianity is in itself excellently well calculated to subserve the Interest of Virtue, and to reform the Manners of Men, will appear most conspicuously to every one, that will impartially examine it; and it would not be very difficult to prove that the good Effects actually produced by it have been, in some considerable Degree, answerable to its excellent Tendency. Tis certain that Mankind in general had never been in a State of greater Degeneracy and Corruption than they were, when Christianity first made its Appearance. " Not only " were the Nations universally involved " in the grossest Polytheism and Idolatry, " but never was there an Age more deeply " immersed in Vice, and all Manner of " Wickedness. The Picture St. Paul " draws of it, in the first Chapter of the " Epistle to the Romans, shocking as it " seems to be, is a very just Representa- " tion of the general State of the heathen " World. But in Proportion as the Gos- " pel prevailed, Multitudes were turned " from

DISCOURSE IV. 97

“ from Idols to serve the living, and true
“ God; brought from the most stupid
“ Idolatry to the pure Adoration of the
“ Deity, and from the most abominable
“ Vices to the Practice of Virtue and
“ Righteousness.”

From the most authentic Accounts of antient Times it is evident, “ That the primitive Christians were, taking them generally, the most pious and virtuous Body of Men that ever appeared in the World. And though sometimes the antient Christian Writers, in the Ardor of their Zeal, complain of the Corruption and Degeneracy, that was growing among them, yet it appears from many Passages in their Writings, that the Body of Christians was remarkably distinguished by the Purity of their Lives and Manners from the rest of Mankind.” One of the Topics which the more antient Christian Authors constantly insisted upon in their Writings against the Heathens, and in their Apologies for Christianity, “ was the mighty Change that was wrought in the Lives

H “ and

98 DISCOURSE V.

“ and Manners of those, who had embraced it. So great and visible was the Reformation, which the Christian Religion then effected, in general, in those who were converted to it, that their Adversaries themselves were not able to deny it;” nay some of them bore open Testimony to it, and recommended the Lives of Christians, notwithstanding all their Prejudices against their Principles, as worthy of universal Imitation. And how much soever Christian Professors may be supposed to have degenerated, in any succeeding, or modern Times, from what they had been in the first Ages; tis highly probable that, “ if the Restraints of the Christian Religion had been removed, the Corruption would have been much greater and more general;” nay, in no Degree inferior to that, which prevailed in the World, when Christianity was first published.

That the State of the World has never been, upon the whole, and in all Respects, so depraved and degenerate since, as it was

at

DISCOURSE V. 99

at and before that Period, is a Point concerning which we are capable of attaining some very satisfactory Evidence; and it is not to be doubted, " but that there are " many even now engaged by the Motives " and Precepts of Christianity to lead " virtuous and ornamental Lives, who " otherwise would have been very corrupt " and dissolute." Christianity is not destitute of great Numbers of *living Witnesses* to its Perfection and Excellence, its transcendent Purity, and useful Tendency: And it is much to be lamented that all, who profess it, are not equally solicitous to do it Justice, and support its Credit.

A Christian, whose Life is at Variance with his Profession, whose Temper and Behaviour are unholy and unchristian, is a *Disgrace* to his Religion, and *Dishonour* to its Author. He, as it were, *crucifies his Lord afresh*, and puts him to *open Shame*. He gives Occasion to his Enemies to blaspheme, to call in Question the Sacredness of his Character, the Divinity of his Mission, and the moral and beneficial Ten-

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100 DISCOURSE V.

dency of his most holy and excellent Religion.

But further, Christian Professors, though they abstain from some of the more gross and scandalous Vices, and even behave in other Respects ever so irreproachably, yet, may be justly said to *dishonour* the Author of their Religion, if they *arrogate to themselves any Honour*, that is incompatible with the Character, they have assumed as his *Disciples* and *Subjects*. To give some Instances; Christians are guilty of *dishonouring* the Founder of their Religion, and of acting inconsistently with their Character as his *Disciples* and *Servants*; when they take upon them to *mend* or *alter* his Laws, either by *adding* to them, or *diminishing* from them. When they attempt on any Occasion to *wrest* them from their *true* and *natural* Meaning; and, instead of forming their Sentiments by them, endeavour to *accommodate* them to their own *favourite* Notions, and *preconceived* Opinions. Christians, who aim to act in Character, and have a due Sense of the *Honour*, which they owe to *Christ*, regard

DISCOURSE V. 101

gard him both as the *Author and Finisher of their Faith*; consider his Gospel, in its own *native Form*, and as originally delivered to the Saints, as complete and perfect; are solicitous to pay it becoming Deference in *all its Parts*, and to bring every *Thought* into the strictest Conformity to it.

Further, Christians arrogate unbecoming Honour to *themselves*, and are justly chargeable with *dishonouring Christ*, when they take upon them *authoritatively to explain* his Law, or set their own *Sense* and *Interpretation* of it, upon a *Level* with it; when they substitute their own *arbitrary* and *uncertain Explications* of the Gospel, in the Room of the Gospel itself, as Standards of Christian Truth, or Tests of Christian Orthodoxy, make the Belief of them a Term of Christian Communion and Fellowship; or think an Assent to them, as well as to the Gospel itself, to be essentially requisite to constitute a Christian. This, in Effect, is to step into the Throne of Christ, aspire to a Power to which they have no rightful Claim, to

H 3 become

become Lawgivers where they have no legislative Authority, Judges of *another Man's Servants*, and where they have no Kind of Jurisdiction: A Conduct infinitely preposterous, which has been productive of numberless Absurdities, and a Multitude of the most mischievous Consequences.

Had Christians never arrogated undue Honour to themselves, or aspired to a Power, to which they had no Right; had they, at no Time, and in no Instance, rushed beyond their proper Sphere, and exalted *themselves against their Lord*; had they never set their *own Opinions* on a *Level* with his *Gospel*, nor thought an Ascent to Christianity itself, independent of all human Explanations, insufficient to constitute a Man a Christian Believer; Differences in speculative Points, and Things of doubtful Disputation had in no Season, and in no Degree disturbed the Peace of Christendom; the Christian Church had never been divided into *Sects* and *Parties*, nor the Body of Christ separated from its proper Head; it would never have been thought

DISCOURSE V. 103

thought necessary, towards maintaining the Unity of the Faith, to invest fallible Men with *Infallibility*, nor would the perfect Law of Christ have ever been reckoned either an insufficient Guide to Truth, or an ineffectual Guard against all dangerous Errors; we should never have heard of Councils summoned to inquire after the Standard of Orthodoxy, to determine Points of religious Controversy, and to establish Creeds and Articles of Faith by a Majority of Voices; Christians would never have thought Christianity itself in Danger, that Religion which is *founded upon a Rock*, and *against which it is impossible that the Gates of Hell should prevail*, when only the Absurdity of their own Opinions was likely to be exposed, much less would they have been tempted to use Force and Violence to support and defend them. Bigotry and Uncharitableness, Contention and Discord, Hatred and Persecution, and other execrable Fruits of that Wisdom, which is *earthly, sensual, and devilish*, would never have sprung up in the spiritual Empire of the Prince of Peace,

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and among the Professors of the *Religion of Love*. Had Christians always remembered that they themselves were *all Brethren* and *Fellow Servants*; and that one only was their Master, even *Christ*; the Christian Church would ever have been as a City that is compact together; perpetual Peace would have continued within its Walls, and constant Prosperity within its Palaces.

So peculiarly pertinent to the present Purpose is a certain Passage, in the Writings of the great Champion of Protestantism, the immortal *Chillingworth*, that I shall take the Liberty to transcribe it.

“ You find Fault, says he to his *Romish*
“ Antagonists, with Dr. *Potter* for his
“ Virtues; you are offended with him for
“ not usurping the Authority he hath not;
“ in a Word for not playing the *Pope*.
“ Certainly if Protestants be faulty in *this*
“ *Matter*, it is for doing it *too much*, and
“ not *too little*. This presumptuous im-
“ posing of the *Senses of Men* upon the
“ *Words of God*, the *special Senses of Men*
“ upon the *general Words of God*, and
“ laying

DISCOURSE V. 105

“ laying them upon Mens Consciences together, under the equal Penalty of Death, and Damnation; this vain Conceit that we can speak of the *Things of God*; better than in the *Words of God*; this deifying our own Interpretations, and tyrannous inforcing them upon others; this restraining the Word of God from that *Latitude* and *Generality*, and the Understandings of Men from that *Liberty*, wherein Christ and his Apostles left them, is, and hath been the *only Fountain* of the *Schisms* of the Church, and that which makes them continue the *common Incendiary* of Christendom, and that which tears in *Pieces* not the Coat, but the Bowels and Members of Christ: ridente Turcâ nec dolente Judæo. Take away these *Walls* of Separation, and all will quickly be one. Take away this persecuting, burning, cursing, and damning of Men for not subscribing to the *Words of Men*, as the *Words of God*; require of Christians only to believe Christ, and to call no Man Master but him only; let those

“ leave

“ leave off claiming *Infallibility*, that have
“ no Title to it, and let them that in their
“ Words disclaim it, disclaim it likewise
“ in their Actions; in a Word, take away
“ Tyranny, which is the Devil’s Instru-
“ ment to support Errors, and Superstition-
“ ons, and Impieties in the several Parts
“ of the World, which could not other-
“ wise long withstand the Power of Truth,
“ I say, take away Tyranny, and restore
“ Christians to their just and full Liberty
“ of captivating their Understanding to
“ Scripture only, and as Rivers, when they
“ have a free Passage, run all to the
“ Ocean, so it may well be hoped by
“ God’s Blessing, that universal Liberty,
“ thus moderated, may quickly reduce Christendom to Truth and Unity.” Again,

As Christians are guilty of dishonouring Christ, when they arrogate undue Honour to themselves, so they are alike culpable when they give to any others any Part of that Honour, which is due only to Christ. This they do, when they part with the inestimable Right of private Judgment, and submit their Faith and Conscience to the

DISCOURSE V. 107

the Government and Direction of others. The evil and pernicious Nature of such a Conduct needs no Illustration. By such a Procedure Christians build up what the Author of their Religion had laboured to overturn, strengthen and countenance lawless Usurpations and unrighteous Claims, act below their Christian Dignity, discover a Spirit mean and unnatural, and destitute of a grateful Sense of their Christian Privileges, part with their Glory as the *Sons of God*, and the *Sons of Liberty*, subject themselves, though free, to the most grievous and ignominious Yoke of Bondage, sink their Credit in the Eye of all superior Beings, expose themselves to Craft and Deception, change a safe and certain Guide, for one that is uncertain and dangerous, a Guide that *may* lead them to the Commission of the most atrocious Crimes, in the *present* World, and by necessary Consequence, to inexpressible Miseries in *another*. In a Word, by giving that Honour to *others*, which is due only to *Christ*, Christians degrade, dishonour, and endanger themselves, and become liable

ble to innumerable Evils both here and hereafter. Of infinite Moment is it then for Christians to be ever tenacious of their Master's Honour, and to stand fast in the Liberty, wherewith he has made them free. But

Secondly, if Christ reflects real and distinguished Honour upon those who believe in him, it is the manifest Duty of all Christian Believers to honour one another. One of the express Precepts of Christianity is to honour all men. There is an Honour due from Christians to each other as Men, as Creatures made in the Likeness of God, and but little lower than the Angels; an Honour founded in the natural Dignity of the human Character. There is also an additional Honour, which they owe to one another, as Christians, as Persons distinguished by many superior Privileges, and in Consequence of the peculiar Relation, in which they stand to their illustrious and common Lord; as Beings that are designed to be soon made like and equal to the Angels. By a Christian, or a Believer in Christ we are not to understand one whose Profession is merely

DISCOURSE V. 109

merely nominal, or whose *Faith* in Christ is dead and *Fruitless*; not one of this or the other particular *Sect* and *Denomination*; not a *Papist* nor a *Protestant*, not a *Lutheran*, nor a *Calvinist*, not an *Episcopalian*, nor a *Presbyterian*; but every one, in every *Place*, that nameth the name of *Christ*, professes himself his Disciple, and the Tenor of whose *Conversation* is such as becometh his *Gospel*; every Christian *Professor*, whose *Life* and *Conduct* bear *Witness* to the Rectitude of his *Mind*, or the Goodness and Integrity of his *Heart*. If a Man calls himself a *Christian*, and yet walks unsuitably to his *Christian Vocation*, or lives in open Violation of the Laws of *Christ*, he is a *Disgrace* to his Profession, and unworthy of all *Christian Honour*. If any Man that is called a *Brother*, or professes himself a *Christian*, be a *Fornicator*, sensual and impure, or *covetous*, of a greedy Appetite for Gain, or an inordinate Lover of Money, or a *Railer*, given to wrathful, abusive, or opprobious Language, or a *Drunkard*, customarily overtaken, and intoxicated with Liquor, or an *Extortioner*, an oppressor of others by way
of Extor-

110 DISCOURSE V.

of Extortion, by rapacious Usury, or other Methods of taking an Advantage of their Wants, or Dependence upon him; or guilty of any open and notorious Vices whatever, his Pretensions to Christianity are vain and groundless, and therefore he is entitled to no Kind of Respect or Esteem by Virtue of his Christian Profession; but rather deserving less regard than he would have been, had he never assumed the Name of Christian. 1 Cor. v. 11.

But though no Man has a right to be considered as a *Christian*, or a Claim to any Degree of Honour *as such*, whose Life and Conversation shew that, in Reality, he is not a Christian; yet those, who prove their Faith by their Works, shew out of a good Conversation, that they *really* are, what they profess to be, ought on no Account to have the Respect due unto them, withheld from them. None are to be rejected or disesteemed, whom Christ receives and honours. It is not sufficient that Christians honour those of their own Party, or peculiar Mode of Thinking, unless they extend their respectful Regards to all

DISCOURSE V. III.

to all of every Sect and Denomination, who profess the Christian Faith, and by a well ordered Conversation adorn the Christian Doctrine. When Christians *honour* those only of their own particular Way of Thinking, they may be properly said not to honour any, as they stand related to the Author of their Religion, or *as they are believers in Christ*, but only as they are allied to themselves; and give Countenance to their own Opinions.

Such a Conduct is as truly *unchristian*, as it is selfish and ungenerous. *In Honour to prefer one another*, or to be *first* in giving Honour to each other, is a Precept given to Christians in *general*, and is of *universal* Obligation. Now the *Honour*, which, it is incumbent upon Christians to pay to each other, is to consider one another in all Respects as *Brethren*; as Persons related to the same common Head and Lord, entitled to the same Blessings, invested with the same Privileges, the same Freedom and independency, and the same inalienable Right of private Judgment, walking by the same Rule, the same perfect

Law

112 DISCOURSE V.

Law of Liberty; having one Hope of their Calling, the same ineffably glorious Objects in View, an incorruptible Crown of Righteousness, an immovable Kingdom, an immortal, undefiled, and unfading Inheritance. But

Thirdly, If Christ Jesus is an Honour to Christians, they have solid Reason not to be ashamed, either of him, or of themselves as his Disciples. In the primitive Ages of Christianity, and when every one, who would live godly in Christ Jesus, became an Object of general Contempt, and liable to Persecution, not to be ashamed of Christ and his Religion was peculiarly difficult, discovered uncommon Resolution and Fortitude, and was almost a certain and infallible Criterion of a true and genuine Christian. We therefore find our Saviour grounding upon it the following animating Promise. Whosoever shall confess me before Men, him will I confess also before my Father, who is in Heaven. Mat. x. 32.

But in a Country, where Christianity is the reigning and popular Religion, where the best Christian stands the best Chance,

upon

DISCOURSE V. 113

upon the whole, for being the *happiest Man*, and is of all Persons in *least Danger* of being molested; where the *Profession of Christianity* is so far from being a *Disgrace*, that it is in general *reputed an Honour*; *not to be ashamed of Christ* is a Thing in itself so easy that it requires but few Arguments to *recommend it*. If Christians *now*, and in a Country so renowned for its *Liberty*, incur *Shame and Reproach*, it must be, not on Account of Christianity, but their not being more conformable to its *Dic-tates*, and more sincere, and in earnest in their *Profession of it*; their manifesting an *unevangelical temper*, and an *unchristian Behaviour*; their acting out of *Character*, aspiring to *Power and Preeminence*, which they have no *Right to claim*, which have neither a *Foundation in*, nor *Countenance from their Religion*; their desiring to *lord it over their Equals*, and *govern where their sole Business is to serve*; or their exposing to public *Inspection*, placing upon a *Hill*, a *reproachful*, and *censurable Character*.

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114 DISCOURSE V.

A *Conversation* in all Respects becoming the Gospel, a *Conduct* truly and *unaffectedly Christian* is, at present, in no Degree liable to be traduced and *vilified*. Having popular Prejudice in its Favour, as well as its own intrinsic Excellence to recommend it, it must be the *shortest* and most *certain* Road to Reputation and *Honour*; nor can a Person truly solicitous to maintain it have any Kind of Motive to be *ashamed of it*.

However, as not being ashamed of our Religion, or the *public Profession* of it is in itself a worthy Disposition, an essential Ingredient in the Christian Character, *indispensably* necessary, though not *alone* sufficient to our final Acceptance and future Happiness, it undoubtedly merits our Attention now, and at all Times. *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels.* But

Fourthly and lastly, If Christ Jesus to them that believe in him, or to such as are his genuine Disciples is an *Honour*, or, which

DISCOURSE V. 115

which is the same in Effect, if to be a Christian is in itself truly honourable, let us ever retain upon our Minds a becoming Sense of our *Christian Dignity*, and study by all proper Means to support and maintain it. Let nothing appear either in our Temper or Behaviour, that is *mean* or *unseemly*; nothing *unchristian*, and *unworthy* of our high and holy *Vocation*. The Advice given by the Apostle, in some of the Verses succeeding our Text, to the primitive Christians, is equally applicable to all others. *Abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul, having your Conversation honest*, or, as the Word might have been more properly rendered, *honourable among the Gentiles*. Wherever we are, let us remember that we are *Christians*, and attentively consider what Kind of Behaviour will best become so exalted a Character. *Whatsoever Things are honest, venerable and decent, whatsoever Things are true, right and fit, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of a good Report, if there be any Virtue, and if there be*

116 DISCOURSE V.

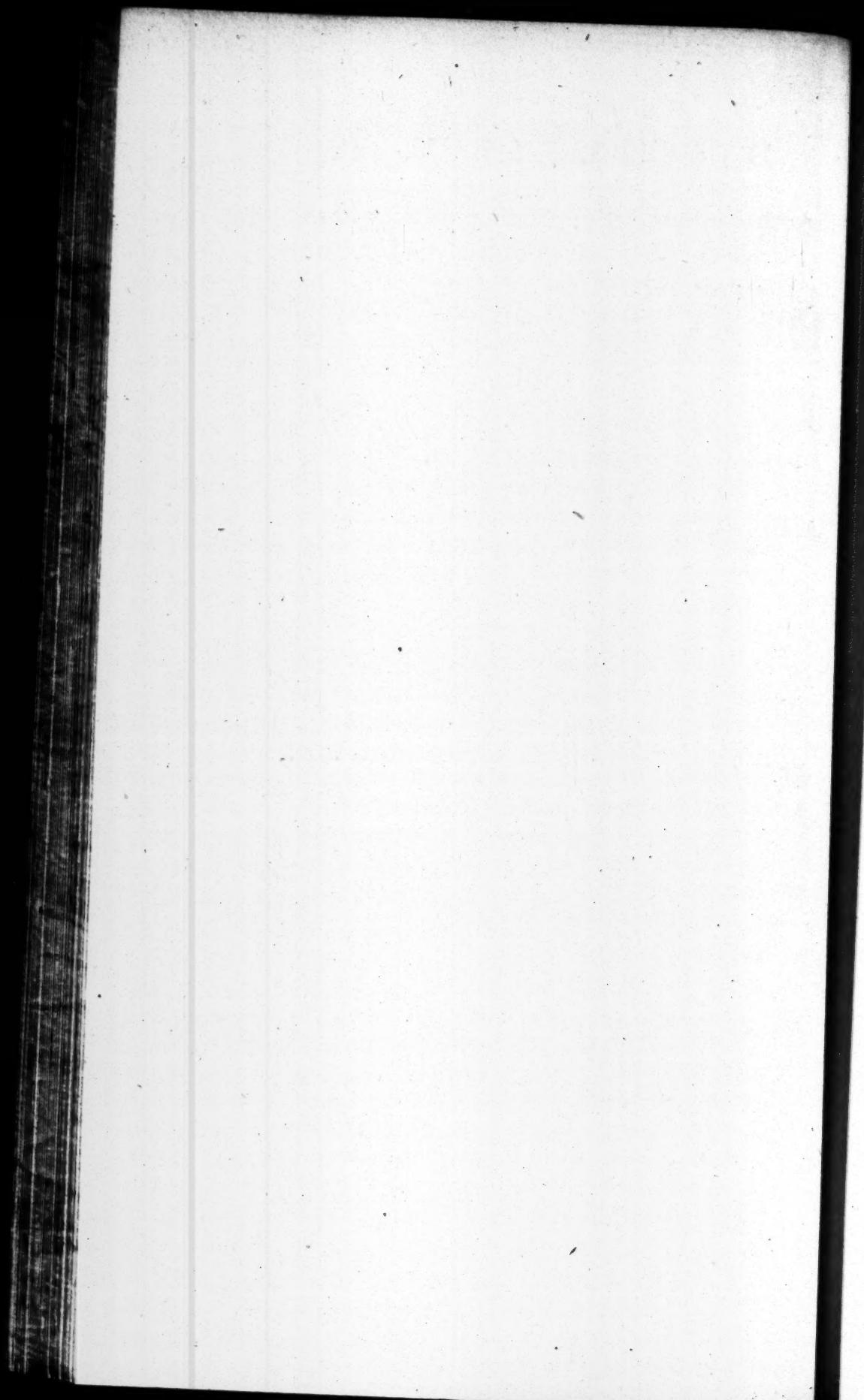
any Thing worthy of *Praise*, *think on these Things*: Let them be seriously considered, and uniformly and steadily practised.

Let us reflect that by assuming the christian Character we have, in a Sense, *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, appear as *his Representatives*, and have engaged in his Absence, and to the utmost Extent of our Abilities to support and spread his Honour, and Credit in the World. Let our Minds habitually dwell on the *Pattern* he hath given us, the matchless Perfection, and unrivalled Beauty and Loveliness of his Character. Let us consider how he would have acted in this or the other Circumstance, and earnestly endeavour to act ourselves in like manner. *As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so let us walk in him.* As he has left us an Example that we might follow his Steps, let us aim to walk *even as he walked*. He hath shewn us the Way to *Virtue* and *Glory*. Let us steadily proceed in it, and be it our constant Care that in all things he be *glorified in us, and by us*. Let us endeavour, in all Respects, to do *Honour* to our Profession, and the illustrious

Author

DISCOURSE V. 117

Author of our Religion; that we may have Boldness at last *in his Presence*, and not be ashamed before him, at his Coming.



DISCOURSE VI.

Christian Selfdenial explained, and recommended.



M A T. XVI. 24.

Then said Jesus unto his Disciples, if any Man will come after me, let him deny himself.

FEW Things perhaps have been so ill understood as *Christian Selfdenial*. It is however prescribed by the highest Authority, and is of essential Importance.

I shall therefore attempt in the first Place to explain it.

And then proceed to recommend the Practice of it.

“ The Word Selfdenial, it must be confessed, sounds harsh and ungrateful.

120 DISCOURSE VI.

"Enthusiasm has spread *Darkness* all around it. The severe and rigidly re-cluse, have made it appear *frightful*. But the Question is not what a *Monster* Error has represented it to be; but what it really is in *itself*." It is, in short and in *Truth*, nothing more, but the keeping within *due Bounds* our various Appetites and Passions; controuling their Excesses and Irregularities, and never allowing them to take the *Lead* in the Direction of our Lives: or, in other Words, it is the maintaining an unblemished and steady Integrity; and acting an uniformly proper Part in Opposition to *all Temptations* to a contrary Behaviour. That it is *really*, and in *some Degree*, a difficult and painful Exercise, must be acknowledged; and also that the *Necessity* of it is entirely founded in the present *Imperfection* of our *Nature* and *Circumstances*.

So absolutely perfect and unrivalledly blessed is the divine Being, that he *cannot deny himself* in any Instance. And it yields the most solid Foundation of *Joy* to the whole *virtuous* Creation, that the universal

DISCOURSE VI. 121

sal Parent, and supreme Ruler does *all* Things according to his own *Pleasure*, and the Counsels of his own *Will*; and that with him *there is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning.*

As to the more exalted Orders of *created* Intelligences, and among others, the Spirits of just Men made *perfect*; it is one eminent Privilege of their State to have *no Need of Selfdenial*. A full and unvaried Conformity to the *whole Bent* of their Minds, and *every Propensity* of their Natures is nothing less than *perfect Virtue*. In the Kingdom of God on high perfect Self-indulgence is consummate Holiness. *There* every Instance of Selfdenial would be a Deviation from the Law of Righteousness. But not such is the *present Condition* of Humanity. *Here* without Self-denial to a certain Degree Virtue and moral Perfection are unattainable. And one Reason of this is that the *present Imperfection* of our *Nature* is such, as not to be in *all its Parts*, like that of Creatures more refined and exalted, a *Law to ourselves*; or an *unerring Rule of Conduct*. Such is the

the *Strength* of the several Passions and *Affections* of the Mind, and also of the various *Appetites* of the Body, that *they* are unsafe and dangerous Guides, and if not properly directed and governed will often lead us astray from the Paths of Virtue and Rectitude. *These*, instead of *invariably* prescribing Rules of right Conduct, must themselves, before we can maintain due Propriety of Behaviour, be regulated and restrained; and it is impossible that this should be done without some Difficulty, and *Selfdenial*.

And as *Selfdenial* is thus rendered necessary through the *present Imperfection* of our *Nature*; so an additional Reason for the Practice of it may sometimes arise from a similar *Imperfection* of external *Circumstances*. The most consummate Virtue attainable in the present State is so far from being an *everflowing Source of perfect, unallayed Felicity*, that it has been known sometimes to expose its Friends, and Adherents to a Variety of Sufferings and Pains; and even to render them, with Respect to their *outward Condition*, *of all Men*

DISCOURSE VI. 123

Men the most miserable. This was the Case with the divine Founder of our Religion, that *holy One of God, who knew no Sin, and fulfilled all Righteousness*; and also with the Generality of his Disciples, and Followers in the primitive Ages of Christianity. There was a Time, when no Man could live godly and virtuously *in Christ Jesus without suffering Persecution.*

But whatever *Imperfections* either of *Nature* or *Circumstances* may now attend us, yet I propose to shew that an uniform, persevering Course of universal Virtue is upon *the whole the highest Selfindulgence*; and the Practice of Vice and the Service of Sin the *greatest Selfdenial.*

But before this be done, it will be expedient to attempt a more particular Explanation of that Selfdenial, which is truly *necessary*, and which our Saviour has so peremptorily required of us. Here, that we may attain more distinct, and adequate Conceptions of it, it may be proper first, to rectify some of the principal Mistakes that have arisen concerning it.

Whatever any weak and enthusiastic
Minds

Minds may have imagined to the contrary, no man, is required to deny himself to be what *he is*; or to own himself to be what *he is not*; but honestly and sincerely to endeavour in all Respects to be, what he *ought to be*; or in every Circumstance, and on all Occasions to do that which is right and proper. It never can be the Duty of any Man to contradict the Truth; either by depreciating any of his Virtues and good Qualities; or by charging himself with Sins, of which he was never guilty. No rational Selfdenial can ever lead a Person of intrinsic Worth, and real Goodness to consider himself as destitute of every moral Excellence and abandonedly wicked.

Yet, some seem to think, to adopt the Language of a late eminent writer, " that
" it is *essentially necessary* to entertain the
" *meanest* and *vilest* Opinion of them-
" selves, they can possibly form; having
" set out with this false Principle, that
" they cannot *degrade* themselves enough.
However it is most certain and obvious that we *ought* not to think or speak either of ourselves or others *too meanly*, any more than *too highly*. Again

DISCOURSE VI. 125

Again, that *Selfdenial* which is essentially necessary and acceptable to God, consists not in what the Apostle emphatically styles *voluntary Humility*, and *Will-worship*; or in any *unprescribed Obedience*, and *un-commanded Services*. It comprehends in it no needless *Austerities*, nor any Works of *Supererogation*. Whoever attempts to do more than is *required* of him; in Effect does less; as he so far deviates from the Rules of *right Conduct*; and instead of recommending himself to the Approbation and Acceptance of the Deity, renders himself deservedly obnoxious to his Displeasure. Instead of presenting unto God a *reasonable Service* he labours *in vain*, and is guilty of *offering the Sacrifice of Fools*.

Much less acceptable and pleasing to God we may then suppose the Conduct of those to be, who think to gain his Favour by any *unnecessary Sufferings* and *Mortifications*; or by exposing themselves to any avoidable Evils and Dangers. “ *Selfdenial*, when separated from its *imaginary*, “ and *unnatural Attendants of Penance*, “ and *Famines*, *Melancholy*, *Gloominess*, “ and *Solitude*, will be found to be nothing else

" else to the *sound Mind*, but what Tem-
" perance is to the Body ; and the only
" infallible Means of restoring Health,
" and Quiet, to a *disordered* and *troubled*
" *Mind*".

That the happiest and best of all Beings should take Pleasure in beholding any of his Creatures making themselves *miserable*, is a Notion so exceedingly absurd, that one might readily imagine, it could never have entered into any human Mind ; yet in Fact no Notion has been more universally prevalent in every Age of the World. Not only the more ignorant Heathens have been enslaved by it, but the same abject Idea has debased the Creed of the greater Part of Christendom.

Wherever the *Romish Superstition* hath prevailed, Mortifications and Penances are held in such high Estimation, that they are regarded as *essential* Parts of true Religion ; and not unfrequently substituted for the *whole*. There a temporary Abstinence from the most innocent and lawful Pleasures, and a voluntary Submission to Pain have often been reckoned equivalent to Ab-
stinence

DISCOURSE VI. 127

stineness from Sin, and even sufficient to expiate the Guilt of the most atrocious and horrid Crimes. But how contrary all this to every Dictate of that Religion, which before God is pure, and undefiled? How repugnant to his Will, who is perfect in Wisdom, and boundless in Mercy? He, whose tender Mercies are over all his Works, and who afflicts willingly none of the Children of Men never can require Submission to Miseries, which may lawfully be avoided, much less approve such Submission as the first of Virtues. He, who rejoices in the Happiness of the whole Creation, denies his Creatures no Pleasure, which is not in itself evil, or in its Nature and Consequences incompatible with their real Welfare and true Interest.

So far is it from being the Duty of Christians to expose themselves unnecessarily to any Misery and Pain, that they are repeatedly called upon to rejoice evermore.

In a Word, nothing can be conceived in itself, and natural Tendency, so full of Consolation, so exceedingly cheerful and joyous, as that Conduct, which they are
really

really directed to maintain; or the holy Religion which they profess.

That *Self-denial*, which is truly *Christian*, *rational*, and alone requisite, is nothing else in Effect than *Self-government*; which consists in maintaining the Empire of Reason over Passion and Appetite; and in suffering none of the inferior and meaner Faculties of our Nature to disturb its Reign, and violate its Laws. Christian Self-denial is *Self-possession*; as far as it prevails all Things are in right Order. The Will and Affections; the several Passions of the Mind, and every bodily Appetite are obedient to the Authority of Reason, and entirely conformable to the Decisions of Conscience. When this is the Case Confusion and Anarchy are infinitely remote, and all within is Harmony, and Peace. The whole Man appears in proper Form, and exhibits a Character thoroughly *Christian*, and altogether *lovely*.

To attain this happy and well-ordered State, “ it is neither necessary nor indeed “ possible to extirpate any Passion or Af-“ fection that is essential to the human

Frame;

DISCOURSE VI. 129

“ Frame; or to eradicate any of the original
“ Principles, which the Creator hath im-
“ planted within us. The whole re-
“ quired of us is to bring the several Pow-
“ ers of our Nature to a true Ballance,
“ and to keep them in due Subordina-
“ tion to each other. The true and just
“ Character of a Man, and of a Christian
“ is not to be without Passions, but to
“ bring them all to a proper Temper.
“ And as we are not required to root out
“ any of our inferior and meaner Powers;
“ but only to keep them within proper
“ Limits, much less are we obliged to
“ offer any Violence to our superior Fa-
“ culties.”

Whatever the Votaries of the *Romish* Superstition or others may have pretended, the Christian Laws in no Instance demand the Renunciation of our Understanding, On the contrary the great End of Christianity is to assert the Authority and Supremacy of Reason; to confirm and establish its Empire, and to enforce an uniform, entire Obedience to all its unprejudiced, and unbiassed Dictates. It has indeed taught

130 DISCOURSE VI.

us to think soberly; to consider ourselves as *fallible*, as knowing only in *Part*; and not as Creatures of unlimited Understanding, or in Possession of all Knowledge. It opposes openly and incessantly the *Pride* of Reason; has a direct Tendency to overturn all *vain Imaginations*, or all false and groundless *Reasonings*; demands an entire Submission to the Authority of God, implicit Faith in, and full Assent to all his Declarations. But it proposes to our Belief Nothing, that is absurd and contradictory; nor any Thing whatever without substantial Proof.

Christianity is an Appeal to every Man's Reason and Conscience in the Sight of God; a Revelation of divine Truth recommended by *credible Evidence*; an Institution *entirely rational*, and which enjoins no other Duty or Service, but what is *perfectly reasonable*. It needs no disguises, and dreads no Inquiries. On the contrary, it submits its Credentials to the Examination of all, and hath made it every Man's Duty to judge *what is right*. It places no Part of Devotion and Religion in

DISCOURSE VI. 131

in Ignorance, and Credulity; but fixes the whole Duty of Man on the Basis of Truth and Knowledge. It prescribes no Rules of Conduct, and consequently no *Selfdenying Practices* but such as are perfectly conformable to the Fitness of Things, and the unbiassed Dictates of our own Minds.

Christian Selfdenial implies in the very Notion of it, that the superior and nobler Powers of the Mind are ever kept on the Throne; Reason and Conscience at Helm, and the whole Man in due Subjection to their supreme Authority, and rightful Sway. It comprehends, in the whole of it, when justly and fairly represented, no more than to keep a Conscience void of Offence, by a resolute Resistance of every Temptation to Sin; and a steady, vigorous Application to all virtuous and worthy Practices, whatever Difficulties may attend them: Or to seek for Glory, Honour, and Immortality by *patient Continuance* in all Well-doing.

Such is the Selfdenial, which our Saviour requires of those, who would

132 DISCOURSE VI.

approve themselves his faithful Disciples; To those, therefore who are not to be frightened by the Sound of Words, our Text will appear to be one of the most useful Lessons of Morality, and what it recommends an essential Ingredient in a truly excellent and virtuous Character.

DIS-

DISCOURSE VII.

Christian Selfdenial explained, and recommended.



M A T. XVI. 24.

Then said Jesus unto his Disciples, if any Man will come after me, let him deny himself.

CH R I S T I A N Selfdenial is a Duty that has been always too much neglected and disregarded, and not unfrequently very ill understood. I therefore proposed, in the foregoing Discourse, to explain it—And then proceed to recommend the Practice of it.

After attempting to rectify some of the principal Mistakes, that have arisen concerning it, I observed, that it comprehends,

hends, in the whole of it, when justly and fairly represented, no more than to keep *a Conscience void of Offence*, by a resolute Resistance of every Temptation to Sin, and a steady, vigorous Application to all virtues and worthy Practices, whatever Difficulties may attend them.

I shall now add, that every Man, and especially every Christian, is *indispensably obliged* to depart from all Iniquity, and to be Proof against all Temptations to Sin, from whatever Quarter they arise. No Prospect of *present Pleasure*, or *temporal Gain*, or of any outward Elevation and Grandeur should prevail with us to violate in any Instance the Laws of Conscience; or even to venture upon any Practices which involve in them the *Suspicion of Guilt*; it being a most obvious, and undoubted Maxim, that *whatever is not of Faith is Sin*, i.e. whatever is done, without a firm Persuasion of the Lawfulness of it, is Sin to him who does it, though it be in itself lawful and innocent. A Follower of Christ must not only refrain from all *known Transgressions*, but also avoid all

Appears-

DISCOURSE VII. 135

Appearances of Evil. He must neither act contrary to the Light he has, nor venture in any Measure *beyond* it. Whatever Motives he may have to a different Behaviour in either Case, he must be content to *deny himself*.

Again, he that would maintain his Integrity and Innocence, and approve himself a worthy Disciple of Christ Jesus, must readily and cheerfully perform every incumbent Duty, whatever Difficulties or Dangers may attend it. Christianity requires Fidelity even unto Death, and an inviolable Adherence to Piety and Virtue in every conceivable Circumstance. If the Cause of Righteousness shall render it necessary, the Christian must be content to *take up his Cross daily*. Provided he may acquit himself with Honour in the Christian Service, and finish the Course, he has to run with Joy, he must be by nothing moved, or terrified; nor *count even his Life dear unto himself*. For, as our Saviour informs us in the Context; *whoever shall save his Life, by violating Integrity and a good Conscience, shall lose it; he shall forfeit*

feit all the Blessings of Immortality; and expose himself to certain Ruin.

What has been advanced here, and in the preceding Discourse may perhaps sufficiently describe the Duty, which our Saviour so peremptorily requires of us considered as *Individuals*; but in Order that we may understand it more completely it may not be inexpedient to take a transient Survey of it with Respect to *Society*.

It is incumbent on Christians to undergo some Inconveniences, and to part with some of their inferior Rights to obtain the more valuable Blessings of good Government; to avoid Contention, and for the sake of Peace; to promote the *superior* Good of others; and to prevent their feeling greater Evils. Christians are taught to consider themselves as Debtors to the whole human Kind; and enjoined, as much as in them lieth, and as far as is consistent with their superior Obligations to God and themselves, to give none Offence, to follow Peace with, and to do Good unto all Men. No Regard to others must ever induce them to part with any

any of those more important Rights, which Reason and Revelation teach them to consider as *inalienable*. No Consideration whatever should prevail with them to be the Servants of Men, in any Instance wherein they are only the Servants of God; or to be so any further than is consistent with the Dignity of the Christian Character, and their Duty and Allegiance to the illustrious Founder of their Religion, and the supreme Ruler. Here the Spirit and Conduct of the great Apostle of the Gentiles might be proposed as peculiarly worthy of Imitation. So far was he from consulting only his own Inclination and Pleasure, that he was ready to *become all Things*, which were in themselves indifferent, or not sinful, *unto all Men*; and in particular, *to become unto the Jews, as a Jew*. As a Conformity to the several Rites and Ceremonies of the Jewish Religion was not then *unlawful*, though by no Means *necessary*; so to avoid Offence, and to testify his own unconfined Benevolence and Charity, he thought fit on some Occasions to conform to them.

But

138 DISCOURSE VII.

But when certain Jews, who had been converted to Christianity, discovered an Inclination to *impose on others*, as of *essential Moment*, what was really a Matter of *Indifference*; and to make the Observance of the Jewish Law, as well as the Gospel of Christ, an indispensable *Term of Salvation* and *Church Communion*; then no Man could manifest a more unyielding, *incompliant Temper*. *When certain false Brethren, actuated by a bigotted, imposing Spirit, came in privily to spy out our LIBERTY, which we have in CHRIST, that they might bring us into BONDAGE; To THEM WE GAVE PLACE BY SUBJECTION, NO NOT FOR AN HOUR.*

But not to expatiate any further on this Head.

I shall now proceed to mention some Considerations to enforce the Practice of the Duty above explained.

We may observe first that *we are not our own*; our own Property, or own Masters. All we are and have, *our Bodies and our Spirits are God's*. A substantial Reason why our *own Wills*; and especially our own

DISCOURSE VII. 139

own irregular and exorbitant Propensities should not be made the Rule of our Conduct. We neither made, nor redeemed ourselves. But God both made and redeemed us: We are *his People*; him therefore we are bound to serve. His Will alone must be our supreme Law, and our only invariable Rule. The Apostle indeed hath told us that Mankind in general *are by Nature a Law*, or Rule of Action, *to themselves*. But this must be understood only of their Reason and Understanding; that nobler Part of their Frame which is spoken of as the Image of God, and the Inspiration of the Almighty. This Rule we undoubtedly may, and ought to follow; as it is in Reality no other than the Will of God. Whilst genuine Reason, and Conscience *well-informed* are suffered to guide, we shall infallibly walk in *right* Paths, and *unblamably* before God. By such a Conduct we shall acknowledge, in the only effectual Manner, God's Supreme and rightful Authority over us; and also practise all the *Selfdenial*, that true Christianity requires of us.

That

140 DISCOURSE VII.

That this may be always practised by us, and that we may *please ourselves* only in the Ways of true Religion and Virtue, and in perfect Consistence with the good Pleasure of God; let us further consider that we are not *our own Judges*.

There is one Judge and Lord of all, who without Respect of Persons judgeth every Man; one to whom we are responsible for our whole Behaviour, and who alone can pass a definitive Sentence upon us, and settle our eternal State. Be it therefore our great concern to walk before God unto all pleasing.

But further, *rational selfdenial*, and Christianity requires no other, is indispensably necessary to Salvation. Except this be practised, or to speak in the Language of the Apostle, unless we **DENY** *all ungodliness, and worldly Lusts; and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World;* it will be utterly in vain to look for the blessed Hope of Christians in the next. *Whoever hath this Hope in him, purifieth himself even as Christ is pure.* Thus we are manifestly obliged to practise every Instance of rational

DISCOURSE VII. 141

rational Selfdenial from a Regard to our own Interest. And here I might very safely mention our *present* as well as *future* Interest. Christianity requires nothing of us, but to give up a smaller good to obtain a more valuable; and to undergo lighter Pains to avoid greater.

This is undoubtedly true, with respect to the *present* State. A well ordered Conversation is in Reality, and upon the whole, the highest possible Selfindulgence. He that declines the Practice of *Christian* Self-denial must inevitably practise much greater. “ It may be justly doubted whether “ by confining ourselves within those “ Bounds, which Virtue prescribes, we “ do not enjoy even sensual Gratificati-“ ons in greater Perfection, than those “ who are immoderate in the Use of them. “ For the Senses are blunted by too much “ Exercise, the Appetite is palled, and “ in Consequence all that succeeds must “ be in Proportion flat and insipid. But “ however this be, the Pleasure of com-“ manding an irregular Propensity is grea-“ ter than any, that can arise from a
“ Com-

“Compliance with it.” Whatever Pleasure a Man may propose to himself in the Road of Intemperance and Licentiousness, it is certain he must offer the most painful and outrageous Violence to all his nobler Faculties; he must renounce the higher Delights of Reason, and the Joys of Conscience; and put up with a wounded Spirit of all temporal Evils the very chief.

Moreover, the Sons of Vice may be justly said, except in Seasons of Persecution, to stand an unequal Chance, upon the whole, with the virtuous and good with Respect to worldly Wealth and Honour; and even in the severest Trials for Righteousness sake, the latter may be supposed, in *real Felicity* far to excel; as they are expressly promised a *Hundredfold* more true Happiness, *with Persecution*, than they could have attained in any other Circumstances, out of the Christian Service, and the Road of Virtue; which Promise was abundantly verified in the Case of the Apostles, and primitive Christians; and there is no Doubt, but it will hold equally true with Respect to all others, in the like Condition,

DISCOURSE VII. 143

Condition, and of a similar Character, to the End of Time. Those, who keep the Commandments of God, have *now* a great Reward, and in a future World they shall inherit all Things.

Such are the Motives to the Practice of Virtue, or *Christian Selfdenial*, and one might be ready to think, that nothing can render them ineffectual; unless it be apprehended, that the Thing itself is *impracticable*. But so far is this from being the Case, that in Comparison it is exceedingly easy. Were Men in general to take half the Pains to be good, that some do to be wicked, it is not to be questioned, but that they would be very completely such.

We may very reasonably conclude that the greatest Difficulties are in Reality on the Side of Vice; and that the most painful and arduous Service, any Man can possibly engage in, is the Service of Sin. *The Way of Transgressors is hard;* whereas the Yoke of Christ is easy, and his Burden light. None of his Commandments, if rightly understood, and impartially considered, can be deemed *grievous*.

The

144 DISCOURSE VII.

The *Practicability* of all that is required of us is certain.

To this Truth the innumerable Multitudes, who have gone before us in an uniform persevering Course of Piety and Virtue; and the regular unwearied Practise of every *rational* and *requisite* Selfdenial, bear united Testimony. They were Men of like Passions with ourselves; had the same *natural Imperfections*; and as great, and many of them *much greater Difficulties* to encounter than we have; yet they fought a good Fight, finished their Course, and kept the Faith; and now reign as Conquerors in the Kingdom of their Father, and are for ever *established* in Righteousness.

Seeing then we are compassed about with so great a *Cloud of Witness*, let us be up, and doing; let us lay aside every Weight, and the Sin, which most easily besets us, and to which we are more peculiarly liable, whether it be Sensuality, Avarice, or Pride. Instead of making Provision for the Flesh with the View of exciting and fulfilling its various Lusts,

" let

DISCOURSE VII. 145

" let us watch the first Motions of licentious Desires, cheek the first Tendencies to Vice; and let us diligently cultivate that virtuous Temper, which is directly opposite to those inordinate mischievous Passions, to which we are most addicted; and from whence we have Reason to apprehend peculiar Danger;" arming ourselves at all Points, and where we are most exposed doubling our Guard, running with unwearied Diligence, and persevering Patience the noble Race, that is set before us, till at length we attain an incorruptible Crown of Righteousness, and all the inconceivably glorious Rewards of Virtue. Let us fight manfully the good Fight of Faith, till we lay hold on eternal Life, and reign in perfect Peace with God on high. To animate us further in our laudable Course, and to excite us with all becoming Affiduity and Zeal to *work out our own Salvation*, let us remember that Almighty Power is ever ready to assist us; and that to this End God himself even now worketh in us.

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Seeing

146 DISCOURSE VII.

Seeing we have such mighty Aids at Hand, and are thus *Fellow Workers with God*, let us go on to subdue every exorbitant Appetite and Passion, and in his Fear to perfect Holiness, till we be found *complete* in every divine and moral Excellence. Encouraged by the constant Presence of every *needful Grace*, inspired with the express and infallible Promises of all sufficient Help, let us cleanse ourselves from all moral Defilements both of Body and Mind; be stedfast, unmoveable, and always abound in the Work of our Lord, till, by the steady Practice of universal Virtue, and every *requisite Selfdenial*, we shine in all the unrivalled Accomplishments of established Christians, and *perfect Men in Christ Jesus*. *Let our Moderation and Temperance, our Diligence and Constancy in every virtuous and laudable Course of acting, be known unto all Men. The Lord is at Hand.*

If sincerely determined to hold fast our Integrity, and in every Circumstance to behave with Propriety, and do our Duty; *let us be anxiously careful for nothing; but*

in

DISCOURSE VII. 147

in every Thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving; let our Requests be made known unto God. And the Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding, shall keep our Hearts and Minds, through Christ Jesus from this Time forth and for ever.

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DISCOURSE VIII.

Our Saviour's Encomium on worldly
Men explained, and properly im-
proved.



L U K E XVI. 8.

— *The Children of this World are in their Generation wiser than the Children of Light.*

TH E S S E Words were spoken by our blessed Lord on closing the Parable of the *unjust Steward*.

In discoursing from them I shall
I. Shew whom we are to understand by
the Children of this World; and whom
by the Children of Light.

L 3

II. In-

150 DISCOURSE VIII.

II. Inquire in what Respect it may be said, that the Children of this World are, in Regard to Wisdom, *superior* to the Children of Light.

III. Point out the Occasion of this Superiority, and the proper Method to be taken by the latter of these Characters in Order to become more wise. —

I. I am to shew whom we are to understand by the Children of this World; and whom by the Children of Light.

By the Children of this World we may understand in general all those, whose Conduct is formed and regulated under the Influence of temporal Things and worldly Motives. All those, whose Views are confined within the Bounds of Time and Sense, who place their *principal* Happiness in terrestrial Enjoyments; and have made either the Riches, Honours or Pleasures of the present Life, the supreme Objects of their Attention and Pursuit, may be justly denominated Men of *this World*. But to none is this Title so frequently applied, and indeed so properly applicable as to Persons actuated by a su-
preme

DISCOURSE VIII. 151

preme Regard to earthly Treasures, or worldly Gain; or whose chief and ruling Passion is Covetousness, or the Love of Money. And from the Account given of the unjust Steward in the Parable, and what is said in Relation to the Mammon of Unrighteousness in the Verses immediately succeeding our Text, it is manifest, that to Persons of this Complexion the Title should be *principally* applied.

But here it may be proper to observe, that our Saviour, by denominating Persons of a covetous Disposition Children of this World, did not design to signify, that any are so far influenced by Principles of Avarice, and a Regard to temporal Emoluments as to be *totally* inattentive to the superior Riches of a *future* World; or destitute of *all Concern* to secure a *Title* to them. All that is necessary, according to our Saviour's Sense of things, to constitute a Man a Child of this World, is to make worldly Wealth and Gain the *principal* Objects of his Attention, and to give them the *Preference* in his Esteem; to labour *more* for the Meat, that perisheth,

L 4 than

152 DISCOURSE VIII.

than for the Meat, that endureth to everlasting Life; to set the Affections *more* on Things on Earth, than on Things above; to be *more* solicitous to accumulate temporal Riches, than to lay up Treasures in Heaven. Every Man is in Truth a Worldling, in whom a worldly Temper *prevails* and *rules*.

Having thus shewn, that by *the Children of this World*, our Saviour intended to signify all those, who are *principally* actuated by worldly Views and Motives, and more especially those, who are swayed and influenced by a supreme Regard to *earthly Treasures*; I shall now briefly inquire whom we are to understand by *the Children of Light*.

This Title we find sometimes applied in the New Testament to *Christian Professors* in general, thereby to intimate the great Superiority of their Privileges and Advantages above the rest of Mankind; and more especially *unbelieving Gentiles*, in Consequence of their being favoured with Gospel Light. Ye are *all*, says the Apostle to the Thessalonian Christians, *the Children*

DISCOURSE VIII. 153

Children of Light, and the Children of the Day. As if he had said, ye are such by your Profession of Christianity, and in Consequence of your possessing the superior Discoveries of the Christian Revelation.

The Gentiles, before the Establishment of Christianity and the Appearance of Gospel Light, are ever spoken of in Scripture, as in a State of comparative *Darkness* and *Ignorance*. *Ye were*, says the Apostle to the Ephesian Converts, *sometimes Darkness, but now ye are Light in the Lord.* And when Christ was sent to be a Light to the *Gentiles*, he is said to be sent to give Light to them, who sat in *Darkness*. And when St. Paul was sent to convert them, he is said to be sent to *turn them from Darkness to Light.* And when another Apostle mentions the Conversion of some of them to Christianity, he tells them, that *God had called them from Darkness to his marvellous Light.* Upon their receiving the Gospel, and embracing the Christian Doctrine they had emerged out of *Darkness* into *Day*; and became, in Comparison

154 DISCOURSE VIII.

rison of others of Mankind, who had not been so highly favoured, *Children of Light*.

But though, on Account of the signal Advantages resulting from the Possession of the Gospel, the Professors of Christianity in general are sometimes denominated *Children of Light*; yet in the Text this Title is differently applied, and used as a distinguishing Characteristic of truly virtuous and good Men as Persons, who look beyond the present transitory Scene of Things, consider this World as a Prelude to another, and themselves as Probationers and Candidates for a future and infinitely more perfect State; being ever under the predominant Influence of invisible and eternal Things, actuated by a supreme Regard to the final Rewards of Righteousness, and the better and more substantial Riches of a future Life. Whilst the chief Care of Children of this World is to accummulate worldly Wealth, to lay up for themselves Treasures on Earth; the *principal* Concern of the Children of Light is to lay up for themselves Treasures in Heaven,

DISCOURSE VIII. 155

ven, and to secure a Title to an immortal, unfading Inheritance in another World.

It being now sufficiently manifest whom we are to understand by *the Children of this World*, and whom by *the Children of Light*; I shall proceed.

II. To inquire in what Respect it may be said, that the former are in Point of Wisdom *superior* to the latter. *The Children of this World are in their Generation wiser than the Children of Light.*

It is in no Degree implied that the former exceed the latter either in *natural* or *acquired Abilities*; that the Men of the World possess a greater Share of Knowledge, or are endued with a better Genius than the Children of Light. In these Respects there may be no Difference; or the Superiority may sometimes be on one Side, and sometimes on the other. But be this as it may, it is certain our Saviour had no Intention to suggest, that worldly Men are the only Men of Sense; or that only the weak and ignorant had a Respect to *future Treasures*, and acted under the prevailing Influence of *invisible Things*; much less
was

156 DISCOURSE VIII.

was it his Design to intimate that, in Order to render himself an approved and successful Candidate for future and celestial Riches, it is necessary for any Man literally to *become a Fool*; or that it is in any Measure a requisite Qualification for attaining the heavenly Inheritance to extinguish Sense and Reason, or to act in any Instance in Opposition to the sober Dictates of our own Understanding.

It is indeed possible for Persons, conscious perhaps of some considerable Defect in their intellectual Powers, or of some peculiar Oddities in their own Behaviour; or who have imbibed some senseless Principles, which they are incapable of defending on the Foot of solid Argument, to give the Text such an Interpretation, and to consider it as an Intimation, that Sense and Reason, in whatever relates to Religion, are useless and of no Importance, and with *real* Goodness and *true* Piety even inconsistent.

But though our Saviour's Words may have been by some thus interpreted, yet it is an Interpretation not more derogatory to his

DISCOURSE VIII. 157

his Honour than repugnant to his Meaning. If some have said the more Reason any Man has, the more Devil ; that Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion, and the best Friend to Religion ; yet it is most certain that not so we have learned of Christ Jesus. He came not into the World to disparage common Sense, but to exalt its Credit ; not to decry the Use of Reason, but to assert its Authority, and to recommend the constant Exercise of it. As he was one that taught the Way of God in Truth, so we find him ever addressing himself to the Understanding of his Hearers, and calling upon them to judge of themselves what was right. The Character he sustains is that of the *Wisdom of God*; and the Religion, he hath taught us, is, in all its Parts, a Religion that claims our Attention, as the genuine Dictates of perfect Reason.

Again, our Saviour, by pronouncing the Children of this World to be *wiser* in their Generation than the Children of Light, in no degree meant, that worldly Wisdom, how high a Place soever it may

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158 DISCOURSE VIII.

have attained in the general Estimation of Men, is in Reality the *best* Wisdom; or that the Men of the World have nobler and more important Ends in View; or take more effectual Measures to befriend their own *real* Interest, and to secure and promote their own *true* Happiness, than the Children of Light. Worldly Wisdom, with Respect to its Ends, and all true and lasting Felicity, will appear, whether we examine it by the Light of Reason or Revelation, to be the most consummate Folly. But if considered without any Reference to its Ends, and only with Respect to the Means it uses in Order to secure them, we shall find it, in general, worthy of the highest Commendation; as well as discern the true Foundation, and real Meaning of the Assertion in the Text, that *the Children of this World are in their Generation wiser than the Children of Light.*

In the Choice and Application of the aptest and most effectual Means towards attaining their Ends, worldly Men may be generally said to excel all others. Not so dextrous and active are the Children of Light

DISCOURSE VIII. 159

Light in Relation to their spiritual and immortal Interests, and in providing for Eternity; as those are in the Management of their temporal Affairs, and the various Concerns of the present Life.

It is not indeed to be supposed, that this is *universally* the Case; or that our Saviour's Declaration in the Text is to be understood absolutely, and without any Limitation. Doubtless there are some, who discover as much Prudence, Fore-sight, and Care with Respect to their true and best Interest, and in preparing for a future and eternal State, as ever have been shewn by the wisest Worldlings in the Prosecution of earthly Gain, and the fading Treasures of the present Life. But in general the Case, it seems, is otherwise. This perhaps will best appear if we descend to some Particulars.

1. How much more Pains are generally taken by Men, whose Views terminate with the present Life, and who are principally swayed by wordly motives, than by those, who are actuated by a supreme Regard to invisible and eternal Objects, in Order

160 DISCOURSE VIII.

Order to furnish themselves with all needful and proper Knowledge. How few are as solicitous to be instructed in all the Parts of Righteousness, and to be completely furnished unto all good Works, as the Men of the World commonly are to procure every Information, that is requisite to the successful Execution of their wordly Schemes, and the well conducting of their secular Concerns. And one Reason of this perhaps is the imaginary Ease, with which the Knowledge of all moral and divine Truths is to be acquired. The slightest Attention, the most superficial and transient Researches are generally reckoned abundantly sufficient for the Attainment of this Knowledge. Most Men in Imagination have been complete Masters of the Science of Divinity and Morals from their Childhood. It is true that religious and moral Knowledge is of all others the most level to the human Capacity. As the Acquisition of it is of infinite Importance to all, it is therefore, without Doubt, what all are capable of attaining.

But

DISCOURSE VIII. 161

But yet it is not to be acquired without some Pains, nor any very great Proficiency to be made in it without much Labour. We are exhorted, by a Person supremely eminent in Understanding and Wisdom, to seek for it with distinguished Diligence; and to look upon the Acquisition of it as the Fruit of careful Inquiry, and close Attention. We are directed, if we would understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of God, to incline our Ear unto Wisdom and to apply the Heart to Understanding; to seek for her as Silver, and to search for her as for hid Treasure. As in the present Case it is absolutely necessary that every one should be wise for himself; take nothing upon Trust, or without sufficient Evidence to recommend it; as the great Founder of our Religion, the Author and Finisher of our Faith has openly asserted the Right of private Judgment, made it our indispensable Duty to exercise our own Understanding and Reason; much more is certainly requisite to the Attaining of divine and religious Knowledge than to learn by Rote a *Creed* or a *Catechism*;

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162 DISCOURSE VIII.

chism; or to know what Sentiments others entertain, or to place an implicit Faith in their Dictates. We are required to bring every Doctrine to the Test of Reason, and the Law of God; *to try all Things*, and to hold fast that only, which appears to ourselves to be good.

And whatever Acquisitions we have made we are taught to conceive of ourselves as of Persons, who after all know only *in Part*; and therefore are exhorted still to aim at higher Attainments, and to *increase* with the Increase of God in all true Wisdom, and spiritual Understanding. It is expected from us, that we apply ourselves to every Means of Information; *give ourselves up*, as far as we conveniently may, and is consistent with a becoming Attention to the other Duties of Life, *to Reading, Meditation, and Prayer*; *that our Profiting may appear unto all*.

The Knowledge of divine and moral Truths, that Knowledge, which is unto Salvation, which shews us how we are to answer the true Ends of our Being, and how we are to conduct ourselves, so as to

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DISCOURSE VIII. 163

approve ourselves to God, and ensure immortal Felicity is of infinite importance, and deserves the utmost Pains in Order to attain it. *HAPPY is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the Man that getteth Understanding.* *The Merchandise of it is BETTER than the Merchandise of Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold;* yet how few are as diligent in the Pursuit of it, as the Men of the World commonly are in the Prosecution of that Knowledge, which they deem requisite to the well ordering, and successful Management of their temporal Affairs. To the Pursuit of this Knowledge several Years, in that Period of Life, which is most susceptible of Instruction, are entirely devoted; nor are any Means or Opportunities, proper for their further Improvement, neglected in the subsequent Parts of it; in this Respect abundantly verifying our Saviour's Declaration, *that in their Generation they are wiser; more provident, sagacious, and prudent than the Children of Light.*

And as they thus display superior Conduct in Regard to the *Acquisition of Knowledge;*

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164 DISCOURSE VIII.

ledge; may it not be said in general, that they equally excel in the *Application* of it? Is not every well weighed Resolution speedily executed, and every Measure, that yields a probable Prospect of Success vigorously pursued? How sensible of the Value of Time, the Folly and Danger of an indolent, procrastinating Temper, the Importance of seizing the present Opportunity, and of immediately improving every favourable Occurrence to the Furthering of their Designs, and the Advancement of their Interest?

On the contrary; how unstable and wavering often the best Purposes of good Men, of those who aim at the Prize of Glory, and are engaged in the Pursuit of immortal Treasures, and unfading Riches? How remiss and languid comparatively in the Prosecution of the noblest and best Designs. How inattentive to the most promising Means, and the most favourable Opportunities? How improvident in guarding against Temptations and Dangers, and in fortifying themselves against Seasons of Distress and Tribulation; when their Conduct

DISCOURSE VIII. 165

duct is compared with that of Men under the predominant Influence of worldly Views and secular Motives, in providing against cross Incidents, and unfavourable Occurrences, and all such Things as have a Tendency to frustrate their Schemes, and prevent the successful Issue of their Affairs?

Again, how inattentive the Children of Light to past Miscarriages and Errors, and how remiss and careless to reform and rectify them? How little solicitous to prove their own Works, to know their real State, what Progress they have made towards Perfection, and what Defects and Blemishes still remain in their Character? How much more commendable would their Behaviour in all these Respects be, were they to imitate the Pattern given them by the Votaries of Mammon and the Men of the World? How much more vigilant and circumspect would they be in every Circumstance, and through every Period of their Life? How solicitous to avoid every Iniquity, and all Appearances of Evil? How cautious lest at any Time

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166 DISCOURSE VIII.

they fall from their own Stedfastness, and involve themselves in Sin and Guilt? How careful not to expose themselves *unnecessarily* to any Temptation, or Danger? How expeditious in correcting whatever they find amiss either in their Temper or Conduct? How determined would they be to walk with greater Circumspection and Regularity in every future Season? What Pains would they take to try and examine their Ways, to adjust their Accounts, to inquire into the true State of their Minds, the Foundation of their Hopes, and the Grounds upon which they have built their Expectations? How anxious to render their Title to the heavenly Inheritance, and all the transcendent Felicities of a future Life clear and indubitable? With what Assiduity and Care would they work out their own Salvation, by adding to their Faith Virtue; to Virtue Knowledge; to Knowledge Temperance; to Temperance Patience; to Patience Godliness; to Godliness Brotherly Kindness; and to Brotherly Kindness Charity? No Means whatever would be neglected whereby they might

DISCOURSE VIII. 167

might make their Calling and Election sure, *firm* and *unalterable*, prevent their falling, and obtain at length an abundant Entrance into that glorious State on high, where the righteous are for ever established in Virtue, and made Partakers of perfect Joys and everlasting Pleasures.

Were the Children of Light, in Relation to their spiritual and immortal Interest, to copy after the Example of the worldly wise in the Management of their temporal Concerns; and in their Attention to their secular Interest; they would never be *weary* in Well-doing; they would at no Time be *lothful*, but shew all becoming Diligence *to the full Assurance of Hope to the End*. But

III. I shall now proceed to inquire into the Reason, why the Children of Light are in general less attentive to their true and best Interests, than the Children of this World usually are to the infinitely less important Concerns of the present Life; and also to point out the Method proper to be taken by the former of these Characters in Order to become *more wise*.

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168 DISCOURSE VIII.

If pious and good Men are less wise and prudent, less careful and diligent, in REGARD to their immortal Concerns, than worldly Men in general are in Relation to their secular Affairs, and the Concerns of Time; it cannot be owing to any natural Incapacity, or to any insurmountable Impediment or Hindrance that lies in their Way. It is certainly *possible* for them to be, in all Respects, as wise and diligent as the others. Religion has no necessary Connexion with Indiscretion and Indolence. It has no Tendency in itself to blunt and stupify any of our Faculties. Whatever Dexterity and Diligence a Man of the World may discover in the Prosecution of Riches, Pleasure, or the vain unsubstantial Objects of Ambition, it is without Doubt *possible* for a Son of Light to be quite as dexterous and active in the Pursuit of solid Treasures, and immortal Joys.

Again, the superior Activity and Skill of the Children of the World in the Management of their Affairs, and the Prosecution of their Designs, cannot be owing to their having *nobler Ends* in View,

or

DISCOURSE VIII. 169

or a better Prospect of succeeding, than the Children of Light.

As to the Prospect of succeeding in their Enterprises these doubtless have greatly the Advantage. *These* know, or may know and be certain, that all their virtuous Endeavours shall be crowned with abundant Success; and that their Labour in the Lord shall not be in vain. Whereas the best concerted worldly Schemes may miscarry; and the utmost Skill and Industry in the Prosecution of any of the Things of Time may be fruitless and ineffectual. It was an Observation of the wise King, which has the Sanction of universal Experience, *That the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, neither Bread to the wise, nor Riches to Men of Understanding, nor Favour to Men of Skill; but Time and Chance happeneth to them all; for Man also knoweth not his Time, as the Fishes that are taken in an evil Net, and as the Birds that are caught in the Snare; so are the Sons of Men snared in an evil Time, when it falls suddenly upon them.*

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No Sagacity, Precaution or Foresight is capable always of guarding against temporal Evil, and disastrous Events in the present Life; nor any Prudence and Industry of ensuring Success in the Prosecution of any earthly Good. All Things relating to the present World are precarious and uncertain. But every thing that has a Reference to a future World is widely different. With Respect to the momentous Concerns of another State every one may proceed upon a certain Plan, and expect the Event and Issue to be strictly conformable to the Course he steers, and the part he acts. If *truly* solicitous to avoid the Pains and Miseries of a future World, he shall undoubtedly escape them. If in *earnest* about securing celestial Felicities, and a blessed Immortality, he shall *infallibly succeed*. *All Things are ready; and whoever will may take of the Waters of everlasting Life freely.* Therefore let the Conduct of the Children of the World in Relation to temporal Things eversomuch excel that of the Children of Light in Regard to their spiritual

DISCOURSE VIII. 171

spiritual Concerns; it cannot be owing to their having a *better Prospect of Success.*

May we then suppose them to be actuated in their various Pursuits by a Regard to worthier and nobler Objects? By no Means! Perfect and eternal Happiness infinitely surpasses the most exalted Pleasures, and the choicest Possessions of the present, fluctuating, and transitory State. The highest Happiness attainable here is unsatisfying, and mixed with some Allay of Bitterness. It is also unstable, and only for a Season. It is unworthy to be compared with that Felicity, which is perfect and immortal.

How comes it then to pass, that those, who are animated with the Hope of such matchless Bliss, shew less Skill and Diligence than are shewn by Men, who have chosen this World for their Portion, in the Pursuit of an infinitely inferior Good? The Question may be easily resolved. Worldly Minds have a deeper and livelier Sense of the Value of present, temporal Things, than better Minds in general have of the Importance and Excellence of the
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Things of Eternity. And the probable Reason, why the Things of Time have so prevailing an Influence, and make so strong an Impression, and eternal Things comparatively so little, is that temporal Things are *present* and *visible*; and the Things of Eternity *future* and *unseen*. The former are Objects of *Sight*, the latter only of *Faith*. Whoever therefore would be *suitably influenced* by invisible and eternal Things, acquit himself with all becoming Activity and Discretion, in the Management of his immortal Concerns, must endeavour by every rational and proper Means to *strengthen* and *increase* his Faith. *The just live by Faith.* By Faith they overcome the World; that *Faith*, which is *the Substance*, or firm Expectation of *Things hoped for*; and *the Evidence* or convincing Demonstration of *Things not seen*. If the Children of Light be strong in Faith; if their Faith answer the Apostle's Definition, and is in all Respects what it *may*, and *ought* to be; they will naturally abound in all Diligence; excel in all Virtue; make quick Advances towards Perfection, and become

DISCOURSE VIII. 173

become even *wiser* in their Generation, than the Children of this World are in theirs. That they *ought* so to be is unquestionable; that they *may* be so is equally certain.

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DISCOURSE IX.

The real and fervent Desire of
Virtue the only infallible Means
of Happiness.



M A T . V . 6.

Blessed are they, who do hunger and thirst after Righteousness; for they shall be filled.

IN discoursing upon these Words of our blessed Lord I propose to observe the following Method;

I. To inquire what we are to understand by Righteousness: And

II. What by hungering and thirsting after it.

III. To shew that those, who hunger and thirst after Righteousness are blessed.

I. I am to inquire what is here signified by Righteousness.

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176 DISCOURSE IX.

The Word Righteousness is used, in the sacred Writings, in a Variety of Senses; both as applied to God, and as applied to Man. As applied to God, we find it used, in a more *enlarged* Sense, to express the Rectitude of his Nature in general; and, in a more *limited* Sense, the Attribute or Perfection of Justice; “ And very frequently that Goodness, Kindness, Beignity, Mercy and Favour, by which he saves and delivers from any Enemy, Danger, Evil, or Suffering; and hence it is used to signify the Salvation and Deliverance itself, which the Goodness and Favour of God vouchsafes.” As applied to Man, it sometimes signifies Mercy or Kindness to the poor and distressed; and at other Times the whole of that Temper and Conduct incumbent on Man to maintain towards his Fellow Men.

But most frequently it signifies moral Rectitude in general, and refers to the whole Duty of Man with Respect to God, his Fellow Creatures and himself. This is its plain and obvious Signification in 1 John iii. 7. *Every one, that doeth Righte-*

DISCOURSE IX. 177

Righteousness, Everyone, who makes a Conscience of acting agreeably to the whole Rule of his Duty, *is born of God*; he is in the best and noblest Sense a Child of God, and approved of him. In the same and equally comprehensive Sense is the Word to be taken in the Text. “The Righteousness here intended is that Righteousness, which consists in a sincere Endeavour to practise all those Duties, which God requires at our Hands, and to eschew that Evil, which God hath forbidden; in which Sense *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth* are said to be both righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments of the Lord blameless.” The Signification of the Word Righteousness in the Text is the same as in a subsequent Part of the Chapter, where our Saviour says, *except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no Case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* As if he had said, how high a Place soever the Scribes and Pharisees may have in the general Esteem of Men, and whatever Pretensions they may

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make

178 DISCOURSE IX.

make to superior Sanctity and Goodness, yet ye may rest assured that unless your Righteousness exceed theirs; except ye be more virtuous and holy, or *better Men* than they are, all your Hopes of celestial Felicity and Glory will be entirely groundless. *Ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* The Righteousness then here intended, comprehends whatever Things are venerable, pure, just, true, lovely and of good Report; whatever Things are virtuous, and worthy of Praise. It includes in it universal Goodness or *true* Holiness in all its Parts. Righteousness in this Sense is the proper Food of the Mind, as necessary to its Preservation and Well-being, as Meat and Drink are to the Support and Nourishment of the inferior, and less noble Part of our Frame.

Having thus shewn that by Righteousness is here signified *true* Holiness in all its Parts, or *universal* Goodness, all those moral Perfections and good Qualities, that are necessary to the Formation of a Character approved of God, and meet for Heaven; I shall now proceed

II. To

DISCOURSE IX. 179

II. To inquire what we are here to understand by *hungering* and *thirsting* after Righteousness.

The Phrase is evidently figurative, and denotes in general as real and great Concern for maintaining a well-ordered Conversation, and acquiring a Character intrinsically and universally good, as the hungry and thirsty Person has for being supplied with Meat and Drink; or as Men in general have for securing to themselves the *necessary Supports of Life*. It signifies a true Relish for Virtue and Goodness, an ardent Desire after every moral Perfection and Excellence. A Desire, not such as the slothful may have, but such as is an effectual Spring of Action, exciting a Man to use his best and most vigorous Endeavours in Order to gratify it. In other Words, “to hunger and thirst after Righteousness is to be as sensible of the Want of it, as fervently desirous to have it, as industrious to obtain it, as restless and impatient till we enjoy it, as Men usually are, when they are pinched with Hunger

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180 DISCOURSE IX.

" and Thirst. And they who stand thus
" affected to it, shall be satisfied with it."

Which leads me

III. To shew that those, who hunger and thirst after Righteousness, are *blessed*. *Blessed are they, who hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled.* They shall be filled with *Righteousness*, and, by certain and necessary Consequence, with all desirable *Happiness*. They shall be satisfied with the Enjoyment of Righteousness here, and with the Completion and Reward of it hereafter.

First, They shall be filled, or *satisfied* with *Righteousness*. This mental Food is attainable by all. It may be bought without Money and without Price. The Man truly desirous of being good never failed of being so. The real fervent *Desire* of Goodness is Goodness. In moral and religious Pursuits no sincere Endeavours to succeed are ineffectual. *If there be a willing Mind, it is accepted according to what a Man bath, and not according to that he bath not.* The real and ardent Desire of Virtue is what every Man may gratify,

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DISCOURSE IX. 181

in its utmost Extent, and in Spite of all Opposition. This divine and spiritual Food is attainable by all in all Seasons, and on all Occasions. We were made in Order to enjoy it; and it is expressly and repeatedly promised, if not wanting to ourselves, that we shall obtain it. Whatever we may come short of, we cannot fail of possessing Righteousness, if we only have a proper Disposition towards it. We cannot come short of Virtue and true Holiness through the Want of sufficient Means, or any needful Aids. *The divine Power bath given unto us ALL THINGS that appertain to the Life of Godliness through the Knowledge of him, that bath called us to Glory and Virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises; that by these we MIGHT become Partakers of a divine Nature. Having therefore these Promises let us cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God.*

Having Assurance given us that we shall never be tempted above Measure, and beyond our Strength; and that we shall receive all

182 DISCOURSE IX.

requisite Grace to help us, be it our sincere and constant Aim to be holy in all Manner of Conversation. Not that we can expect to be absolutely perfect in the present State, it being certain that *there is no Man, who worketh Righteousness, and sinneth not;* and that *in many Things, all,* even the best offend. Yet this one Thing we may, and ought to do; *forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those Things which are before, to press toward the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

That Measure of Righteousness and Goodness, which shall be approved and accepted of God, we may now acquire. If we sincerely aim to *walk in the Light, as God is in the Light, we have Fellowship with God; and the Blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all Sin;* i. e. all Sin repented of, and forsaken. If we say we have no Sin, and think ourselves absolutely perfect, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us. If we confess our Sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.

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DISCOURSE IX. 183

In this Grace or Favour all sincere and faithful Christians now stand. And in this Grace they may rejoice in the Prospect of another and better State, where they shall be found complete in Righteousness, and where all their Imperfections shall be entirely done away. There they shall appear without Spot or Wrinkle, perfectly holy and without Blemish. *Blessed are they, who hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled.* Filled with Righteousness; and by certain and natural Consequence, filled with Happiness.

There is *Light sown for the righteous, and Gladness for the upright in Heart.* For every pious and well-disposed Mind the amplest Measures of Happiness are designed. The natural and *immediate* Fruit of Righteousness is *Peace.* Peace more solid and more satisfactory than can be derived from any other Source. Such Peace as nothing earthly and external can either give, or take away. It is Peace seated within a Man's own Breast, which it is impossible for others to interrupt, or intermeddle with; Peace which, without a

Man's own Consent, is absolutely inalienable. As every good Man is *wise for himself*, so is he *satisfied from himself*. *He has rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.* Conscious Integrity, the silent *Applause* of his own Mind, and a good Hope towards God are an unfailing Source of Joy in the greatest Tribulations, and the darkest Scenes of Affliction here below.

It is true, that *perfect Pleasure* and *Fulness* of Joy, in a State where Mankind in general are naturally subject to various Disappointments and Vexations; to Pains, Sickness and Death, cannot rationally be expected. In a State so imperfect in itself, where all external Enjoyments are mutable and uncertain; and where so many *unavoidable Evils* abound, Perfection of Happiness can never be attained. The sincerely righteous indeed may even now expect all *needful* and *convenient Good* as Probationers and Candidates for a better, succeeding State, but in that State alone they can hope to be *filled with Happiness*, or to be *completely blessed*. From that State all Sorrow and Trouble; all Affliction and Pain.

DISCOURSE IX. 185

Pain are infinitely remote. There every Joy is *full*, and every Desire *completely satisfyed*. *Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright: For the End of that Man is uninterrupted and everlasting Peace.*

The righteous now have real cause to *rejoice and to be exceeding glad, for GREAT is their Reward in Heaven; GREAT beyond all Description, GREAT beyond all possible Conception. It is a far more exceeding and an eternal Weight of Glory; more than ever entered into the Heart of Man to conceive; Exceeding abundantly more than all we are able to ask, or even to think. We know not what we shall be; this only we know that if we are now sincere and genuine Christians, actuated by a real, ardent Desire after true Holiness and universal Goodness, we shall hereafter be like the Son of God himself; like him in Holiness, Happiness and Glory.*

Such is the Prospect we have before us; animated with so glorious and blessed an Hope, let us go on to Perfection; daily bowing the Knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named, that he would

grant

grant us according to the Riches of his Glory, to be ever improving in all holy Desires, and good Dispositions; that he would grant us to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner Man; that Christ may dwell in our Hearts by Faith; that we being rooted and grounded in Love to God, may be able to comprehend with all Saints, all holy and virtuous Men, what is the Breadth, and Length, Depth, and Height of God's Love towards us; and to know the Love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge, that we may BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD.

I shall now conclude with a few Reflections.

First, If those who hunger and thirst after Righteousness are blessed, because they shall be filled; we have peculiar Reason to be thankful to God for favouring us with the Gospel, whereby it is so clearly shewn unto us, wherein our Happiness lies, and by what Means we may attain it. Reason alone, if ever so little attended to, might have been sufficient to inform us, that no real, solid Felicity could be attained out of the Road of Virtue; in any

DISCOURSE IX. 187

any vicious and immoral Practices; or in any sensual Gratifications, and worldly Pursuits; but without the Aids of Revelation it never could have given us all desirable *Affurance*, that in a Course of Virtue and Holiness Happiness was *always attainable*. *This Assurance* Revelation hath given us. By the Gospel an infinitely blessed and glorious Immortality has been brought to Light as the *certain Reward* of Righteousness. *We know that our Labour in the Lord shall not be in vain.* We know, and are certain, *if our Fruit be unto Holiness, that the End will be Life everlasting;* and that this immense Reward, this inestimable Privilege is *the Gift of God in Christ* to all, who conscientiously aim to approve themselves to him; *to all that fear God, and work Righteousness, in every Nation under Heaven.*

Secondly, We may perceive the great Importance, if we would consult our own and others true Interest and Happiness, of exciting and strengthening, as much as in us lies, an Appetite for Virtue, and a Desire after universal Righteousness both in ourselves

ourselves and them. Wherever the Desire of Goodness is vigorous and predominant, all true Felicity is the certain Consequence. *No good Thing will God withhold from them, who walk uprightly.* Godliness, intrinsic and universal Goodness is profitable unto all Things; having Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come. A noble Motive in particular to those Parents, who have any real Solitude for the Welfare of their Offspring, to use their best Endeavours to train them up in the Ways of Righteousness, and to inspire them with the Love of Goodness. If this once becomes the ruling, leading Passion, no *real* Evil will ever approach them; and every Thing friendly to their true Interest and Happiness will be their certain Portion. If real Goodness, Justice, Fidelity and Mercy, true Holiness and universal Righteousness become the first and principal Objects of their Desire and Attention, all other Things shall be added unto them. But if the Love of Virtue be extinct, or weak and languid, the whole Universe of created Good, if attained,

DISCOURSE IX. 189

attained, would little avail them. Their Minds would remain empty and unsatisfied, be a Prey to Discontent, and to a Number of injurious and licentious Passions, that directly tend to final Destruction and Misery.

Thirdly, If those, who hunger and thirst after Righteousness, are blessed; we may discern the Folly of those, who, to the Neglect of Righteousness, seek for Happiness in the Gratification of other Appetites; spending their Money for that which is not Bread, and their Labour for that which satisfieth not; when they might so easily eat that which is good, and delight their Souls with the most solid and permanent Consolations.

Finally, We may clearly perceive the Wisdom of holding fast our Integrity, and of steadily persevering in all divine and moral Pursuits. We shall be filled. Say to the righteous, it shall be well with him, for he shall reap the Fruit of his Doing. The Path of the just is as the shining Light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect Day. He daily advances towards the full Completion

190 DISCOURSE IX.

pletion of his Wishes. They who fight manfully the good Fight of Faith, and so as to overcome the various Temptations of Life, shall inherit all Things. Be ye therefore stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord; never weary in Well-doing; for in due Time ye shall reap, if ye faint not.

D I S-

DISCOURSE X.

The Apostolic Rule of Preaching.



II. C O R. IV. 5.

We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your Servants for Jesus sake.

IN these Words Christian Ministers are presented with a most plain and perfect Rule of Preaching. They are here expressly told what they *are not*, as well as what they *are to preach*. They are not to *preach themselves*; but *Christ Jesus the Lord, and themselves the Servants of Christians for Jesus sake*.

First, They are not to *preach themselves*. They are not in Preaching to seek their own Glory and secular Advantage; but to be actuated by much higher and nobler

Motives

Motives than those of Ambition and Avarice ; the Love of Praise, and the Love of Money.

But, in Order to understand more clearly and fully *this Part* of the *Apostolic Rule of Preaching*, I propose to inquire a little particularly, when Christian Preachers may be said, in an *unwarrantable* and *criminal* Manner, to *preach themselves*. This they may be justly said to do.

I. When their *governing Motive* is popular Applause, and vain Glory ; a greater Regard to the Praise of Men, than the Praise of God.

It is indeed natural, and even commendable to seek by all lawful and honourable Means a Share in the Esteem, and good Opinion of Men ; and for *Christian Teachers* to endeavour to *please* those to whom they minister *in all Things to their Edification*. *Thus to please* they cannot avoid *attempting*, without disregarding the express Commands of God, and manifesting a most unnatural and culpable Inattention to all the engaging Motives of Gratitude and Friendship.

But

But should Christian Teachers be intent only or principally on establishing their own *Popularity*, and on being admired, and applauded by Men, and not be chiefly swayed, in all their Endeavours to please, by a Regard to the Improvement of their Hearers in real Wisdom and spiritual Understanding, in all divine and moral Perfections, *they sow the Wind, and shall reap Vanity.* When their Lord shall come, and reckon with them, they shall find, that they had weakly preferred a Puff of empty Air to an *eternal Weight of Glory.*

“ Ye preached yourselves, that ye might
“ have Glory of Men; that *only* ye sought,
“ be that your *only* Portion: Depart from
“ me ye vain, and simple Men, ye have
“ had your Reward.” But

2. Christian Instructors may be said to *preach themselves*, in a Manner still more criminal, when from an over Solitude to please, or a servile Fear of offending, they preach any Thing, that, in their *Apprehension*, is not *true*; or when they preach in so *partial* a Manner as to *with-hold* from their Hearers *any Truths*, that apparently

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tend to their spiritual Improvement, and godly Edification, or keep back from them any Thing, that they, in their own Conscience, judge to be *profitable*. As there can be no Pretensions at this Day to Inspiration, *Infallibility* is what an Instructor, who is himself best instructed, can lay no *reasonable* Claim to, and what none can *justly* expect from him. But *Honesty* is an *indispensable* Qualification, and *attainable* by all. It is required in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful, in the Dispensers of the Word of Truth, that they themselves be Men of Truth, and the strictest Integrity; that they in no Instance deviate from, but at all Events hold fast the faithful Word, as they themselves have been taught. We read indeed of *Prophets*, who, because the People *loved to have it so*, prophesied *falsely*; and also of *Priests*, actuated by the same Motive, who dealt *falsely*, who, instead of striking at the Root of Evil, were content with healing the most dangerous Maladies *slightly*, *saying*, *Peace, Peace*, when most firmly persuaded in their own Minds, that there was *really no Peace*:

DISCOURSE X. 195

Peace: Whereby they rendered themselves base, and contemptible, in the Esteem of all wise and discerning Men, as well as exposed themselves to the righteous Condemnation of God.

And as Christian Teachers may be said to preach themselves, when, from the Desire, of pleasing, or Fear of offending, they speak contrary to the Light of their own Minds, and so as to violate in any Instance the Laws of Truth, so they are alike culpable, though in a less flagrant Degree, when they *withold* from their Hearers *such Truths*, as they, in their own Conscience, judge to be *profitable*, or to tend to the *Use of edifying*. They are under a *Necessity* to publish all such Truths, whether those, who attend their Ministra-tions, *will bear*, or *whether they will forbear*.

How noble the Appeal, which the great Apostle of the Gentiles was able to make to the *Ephesian* Christians, when taking his *final* Leave of them; and how powerfully ought it to affect the Hearts, and influence the Conduct of Christian Teach-

ers in general. *Ye know from the first Day that I came into Asia, after what Manner I have been with you at all Seasons; how that I kept back nothing, that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from House to House; testifying, both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my Face no more. Wherefore I take you to Record this Day, that I am pure from the Blood of all Men: For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the Counsel of God.* But

3. Christian Teachers are, in my Apprehension, justly chargeable with *preaching themselves*, when they run into a contrary Extreme, and *publish* any of their own real Sentiments, merely because they are *their own*, and when the Publication of them is likely to be attended with any ill Consequences, or to answer no valuable End. They preach themselves, when they labour with as much Earnestness to persuade Men to believe in all Respects as they

DISCOURSE X. 197

they themselves do, as to believe Christianity; are more intent on pleasing themselves, than on pleasing their Hearers for their Good to Edification, and on propagating their own particular Opinions, than the Truth as it is in Jesus; or when they are as solicitous to make Men either *Episcopalians* or *Presbyterians*, *Lutherans*, or *Calvinists*, as they are to make them *Christians*.

Hast thou Faith? have it to thyself before God is a Rule, that merits the Attention of Christians in general, and more especially of Christian Teachers. A Preacher, that acts agreeably to this Rule, and under the Influence of no criminal *Self-partiality*, will be little disposed to meddle with Controversy, and *Things of doubtful Disputation*. If such Things should occasionally fall in his Way, he will not be *positive* and *dogmatical*, but soberly, and modestly *shew his Opinion*. And being ever possessed of a truly benevolent and candid Spirit, he will most carefully *avoid* all such Questions as tend only to *puzzle* and *distract* weaker Minds, gender *Strife*, and promote *Bigotry*.

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A Christian Teacher, who is determined in no Instance to *preach himself*, will never aim to form a *Party*; nor think it of any essential Moment to bring any, who already believe in Christ, to believe in him *just as he himself does*, or to make Converts to his own particular *Notions* of such as have been already converted from Sin to Righteousness, and *shew out of a good Conversation their Works with Meekness of Wisdom*. Such a one differs *widely*, both in Temper and Conduct, from those *jewish Teachers, and blind Guides*, censured by our Saviour, who, having substituted *Orthodoxy* in the Room of *Virtue*, and a *Conformity* to their own peculiar Mode of thinking, instead of *Sincerity* and *intrinsic Goodness* of Character, as the grand indispensable Term of divine Acceptance and Approbation, were ready, in Order to gain one *Proselyte* to their own *Opinions*, to *compass both Sea and Land*, or even to turn the World upside down.

Not thus Christian Teachers have learned of Christ. They have been taught more Temperance and Moderation, and to

DISCOURSE X. 199

to cultivate a much more amiable and catholic Spirit; not to measure their *Charity* by their own *Orthodoxy*, whether real or imaginary, but to pay a proper Deference to such as may happen to differ from them, and to *think well*, without Exception, of every one, who *does well*; to consider *all* in every Nation under Heaven, who *fear God*, and *work Righteousness*, as being *accepted with him*; and to regard all Persons as their *Fellow Christians*, and *equally entitled* with themselves to all Christian Privileges, who *profess* to believe in *Christ*, and prove the Sincerity of their Faith by their Obedience to his Commands.

They are taught to wish abundant Favour and Peace to all in every Place, and of every Denomination, who appear by their good Conduct to love the Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity, how *weak* or *erroneous* soever they may think them to be in the *Faith*, and Matters of Speculation; to be content, and even *pleased* with seeing Men becoming *Followers of Christ*, how great soever their Indisposition, in this, or the other Particular, to be *Followers of*

them; to be perfectly easy, nay to rejoice with *Thanksgiving*, when the Christian Faith, as contained in the sacred Writings, and as originally delivered to the Saints, is received and honoured, though their own *Peculiarities* of Sentiment, or their own *Explications* of the Scriptures be *utterly disregarded*. This leads me

4. To observe that the Preachers of Christianity are guilty, in a peculiarly *Emphatic Sense*, of *preaching themselves*, when, from an *exorbitant Love of Power*, they aim thereby to acquire any *Dominion* over the *Faith* of Christians, or to become *LORDS over God's Heritage*.

This they may be said particularly to do, whenever they preach any Laws of *their own*, or their own *Explications* of the Laws of Christ himself, as binding and obligatory on the Consciences of Christians. The *former* Method of Preaching has been, in a more *peculiar Manner*, characteristic of the *Romish Teachers*, and the *latter*, but with less Consistency of Behaviour, of *Protestant Instructors*, especially in the more early Periods of the Re-

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DISCOURSE X. 201

formation. These were not of so hardy, and daring a Spirit, as to teach directly the *Commandments of Men*, as the *Doctrines of God*. They declared, with one consenting Voice, that the *BIBLE* was the *only Religion* of *Christians*, and that this alone was binding on Conscience. But by the *BIBLE* none of them understood the *BIBLE itself*, in its own *original* and *native Simplicity*, and as it came down from Heaven; but their *own Sense* and *Explication* of it: And in as high Estimation was their *own Sense* and *Explanation* of Scripture held by them, as the *Commandments of Men* were by the *Romanists*. Though they *professed* a strict Adherence to the *Commandments of God*, in all Matters of Religion, yet they made them, to a great Degree of *none Effect*: for not the *Word of God*, as contained in the sacred Writings, but their *own Interpretation* of it was generally regarded as the best *Test of Orthodoxy*, and the most certain *Standard of Truth*; and a Conformity to this, rather than the other, as the grand *indispensable Term of Christian Communion*.

Though

Though they had renounced *Papery*, in most of its *external Forms*, yet the *worst* and most *malignant Part* of it, even the *Spirit of it*, the *Spirit of Bigotry and Domination* they still retained. If every Man was ready to assert his Right of *judging for himself*, without being questioned or controuled, yet was he very firmly persuaded of his having at least an equal Right of *judging for all others*. And this most groundless, arrogant and *iniquitous Claim*, necessarily and by natural Consequence, gave Birth to *Contention* and *Every evil Work*; split the Protestant World into numberless Sects and Parties; multiplied *Creeds*, *Confessions*, and *human invented Systems of Theology*; spread far and wide a spirit of Animosity and Uncharitableness, and even rekindled, to a Great Degree, the Flames of *Persecution*; which were assiduously fed and kept up, in Turn, by the Leaders and religious Instructors of every Denomination, as they happened to have the *Ascendant*; till at length the common Lord of all in great Kindness and tender Compassion to the Churches, was pleased,

DISCOURSE X. 203

pleased, in some good Measure, to animate them with his own Spirit, *the Spirit of Love, and the Spirit of Liberty;* whereby Numbers, especially among Persons of the most distinguished Eminence, of all Parties, came to be public, and zealous Assertors of the common and *equal Rights of Christians,* openly to disclaim all Authority over their Faith; to exhort them to stand fast in the Liberty, wherewith Christ had made them free; and not to be again entangled with any Yoke of Bondage. The Gospel, in its own native Lustre and divine Glory, having happily shined into their Hearts, as it formerly had into the Hearts of the Apostles, and thence dispelled the thick and horrid Gloom of Enthusiasm, Superstition and Bigotry, they held it forth to the View of all as a perfect Law of Liberty, and the most equitable and benevolent System of Religion, that had ever been published to the World; and proved with irresistible Force of Evidence, what all of every Party had been most thoroughly, and feelingly convinced of, and in most pathetic Terms acknowledged, when it came to be
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their own Turn to suffer; namely, the utter Unreasonableness, and atrocious Injustice of all Restraints upon Conscience, and all Kinds of Persecution on Account of Opinions, in all Times and Places, and from whatever Quarter they might happen to arise.

Animated with the Spirit of Christ, and the genuine Principles of his Religion, the Teachers of Christianity no longer *preached themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and themselves the Servants of Christians for Jesus sake*. Further

5. Christian Teachers may be said to *preach themselves*, when in preaching they take an Opportunity to vent any of their own private Resentments; seek to exalt their own Reputation by lessening that of other Ministers, by arrogant Boastings of superior Abilities, or superior Sanctity, by forming exclusive Claims to Orthodoxy or right Thinking, vain Pretensions to Infallibility, and divine Illumination, and, by aiming to subject others, who happen to differ from them in Opinion, to the Impputation of *Insincerity, Ignorance or Heresy*.

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This Mode of Preaching is of very great Antiquity, as antient as the Times of the Apostles; accordingly we read in their Writings of those, who, being inflated with Pride, and *loving the Pre-eminence*, instead of preaching the Words of Truth and Soberness, *prated against their Brethren*, in the Spirit of *Bitterness*, and with Words of *Malice*: And of others who preached, not as they ought to have preached *sincerely and of Good-will, but of Envy, Strife and Contention*. But finally

6. Religious Instructors may be said, with peculiar Justness, and distinguished Emphasis, to *preach themselves*, when actuated in the Course of their Ministrations by Principles of Avarice, or a Regard to filthy Lucre. When they aim with feigned Words to *make Merchandise* of their Hearers, or like certain *crouching, mean-spirited Priests* under the Mosaic Economy, their leading Motive is to secure to themselves *a Piece of Bread*, or a Livelihood; when in Preaching, their great and principal End is the Advancement of their own *secular Interests*, not the Glory of God,

206 DISCOURSE X.

God, and promoting the spiritual and immortal Welfare of Mankind.

Thus the Apostles *never* preached; and thus doubtless no Christian Ministers *ought* to preach.

We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your Servants for Jesus sake.

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DISCOURSE XI.

The Apostolic Rule of Preaching.

II. C O R. IV. 5.

*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus
the Lord, and ourselves your Servants for
Jesus sake.*

IN these Words Christian Ministers are presented with a most plain and perfect Rule of *Preaching*. They are here expressly told what they *are not*, as well as what they *are to preach*. They are not to *preach themselves*; but Christ Jesus the Lord, and themselves the Servants of Christians for Jesus sake.

First, They are not to *preach themselves*. They are not in preaching to seek their own Glory and secular Advantage; but to be actuated by much higher and nobler Motives

Motives than those of Ambition and Avarice; the Love of Praise and the Love of Money.

But this Part of the Rule having been already considered, I shall now proceed to the other, and inquire

II. When Christian Teachers may be said to preach what they ought to preach; even CHRIST JESUS THE LORD, and *themselves the SERVANTS of Christians for Jesus sake.*

Christian Instructors may be said in general to preach CHRIST JESUS THE LORD, when, in the Course of their Ministry, they faithfully publish whatever has been delivered by him, or concerning him in the holy Scriptures, which alone *testify of him*, not aiming to be wise in any Instance above what is written. To the Law and to the Testimony, to the sacred Oracles of the Old and New Testament, if they speak not according to this Word, they speak at Random, and without any Light. In preaching Christ Jesus the Lord, the holy Scriptures are the only Guide. But to descend to some Particulars. Christian Teachers

DISCOURSE XI. 209

Teachers may be truly said to conform to
this Part of the Apostolic Rule,

i. When they preach CHRIST, which signifies, strictly and properly speaking, to represent him as the true MESSIAH, the *anointed* and *commissioned* of God; and by sound Reasonings maintain his Pretensions to that Character.

This ought to be the principal Object of Attention to a Christian Teacher. He should endeavour, previously to every thing else, to demonstrate, with Clearness and convincing Evidence, the *Divinity* of his Master's *Mission*, and the Truth of his Doctrine. Unless this be first done, to preach him will be altogether vain. The Christian Instructor ought to be well furnished with such Arguments, as are mighty and effectual to the Confirming and Establishing of the Faith of Believers, and to the *Silencing*, if not Convincing of all Gainsayers, whether among Jews or Gentiles.

In Opposition to the Jews, it behoves him to be Master of the several Arguments grounded on those Prophecies of the old Testament relating to the *Messiah*, which

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210 DISCOURSE XI.

they themselves allow to be authentic; and to shew, with Strength and Clearness of Evidence, that the illustrious Author of Christianity is the *very Person*, the *Messiah* or *Christ* therein spoken of. This in all Disputations with the *Jews*, we find to have been an usual Practice of our Lord himself, and of such as were authorized by him to be the first Publishers of his Religion. Accordingly we read of our Saviour, that he said to certain *Jews*, *O Slow of Heart to believe all, that the Prophets have spoken; then, beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the Things concerning himself.* And of the Apostle Paul we have an Account, that when at Theffalonica, where there was a *Synagogue of the Jews*, he, as his Manner was, went in unto them, and reasoned with them out of the *Scriptures*, that *Jesus, whom he preached, was the CHRIST; the true Messiah, the anointed and commissioned of God.* In like Manner we read of Apollos, that he mightily convinced the *Jews*, and that publicly, shewing, by the *Scriptures*, that *Jesus was CHRIST.*

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DISCOURSE XI. 211

In Opposition to all *Gentile* Unbelievers, it behoves the Christian Teacher to be an equal Master of those other Arguments, grounded on our Saviour's virtuous and blameless Life, the moral Tendency and perfect Purity of his Doctrine, and the many Signs and Wonders wrought by himself, and those he commissioned to teach his Religion, in Confirmation of its Truth and divine Original, and in Attestation of his own heavenly Mission. In a Word, the Teachers of Christianity ought to be furnished with and ready to use all those spiritual Weapons, which are mighty through God to the Pulling down of the strong holds of Infidelity, and to the Casting down of all Imaginations, or vain Reasonings; and every high Thing, that exaleth itself against the Knowledge of God, and the divine Authority of their holy Religion, and to the Bringing of every Thought into Captivity to the Obedience of CHRIST, and the Acknowledgment of the great Founder of our Faith as the *anointed* of God. But further,

2. Christian Instructors may be justly

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212 DISCOURSE XI.

said to conform to the Apostolic Rule of Preaching, when they preach the illustrious Author of their Religion as JESUS; or set him forth as a *Saviour*, the Saviour of the World, not of the *Jews* only, but also of the *Gentiles*, not of this, or the other particular Sect, but of *all Men*.

When they represent him as a *Saviour* complete and all sufficient from all natural and moral Evil, from Sin and every Misery consequent to Sin; as one both *willing* and *mighty to save, to save to the uttermost*, to save to Perfection, and to all Eternity *all those, who come to God by him*; as having, by his Obedience unto Death, and the *voluntary Sacrifice* of himself for the Sins of the World, *obtained an eternal Redemption for us*; perfect Deliverance from every Evil, and a sure and certain Title to an infinitely glorious and blessed Immortality to as many, in every Place, as with the Heart believe on his Name, and *sincerely* though imperfectly obey him, to all, who fear God and work Righteousness, of every Nation under Heaven. Further

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DISCOURSE XI. 213

3. Christian Teachers may be justly said to preach agreeably to the Rule in the Text, when they endeavour to display all the distinguishing Glories of Christ's Character as *LORD*. When they set forth, in all the Strength and Energy of *inspired Language*, his *personal Dignity*, as the *Lord from Heaven*; as the *only begotten Son of God*, the *Brightness of the Father's Glory*, and the *express Image of his Person*; exalted far above all *Principalities and Powers*, and every *Name, that is named*; not only on Earth but also in *Heaven*; as the *Head over all Things unto his Church*, its sole King, Lawgiver and Judge; when they openly and without Reserve declare that to us as *Christians*, there is only one *Lord*, only one Master even *Christ*; and that under him, we are as *Christians* on a Foot of absolute Equality, perfectly free and independent; that as Christians we are all in like Manner the Lord's *Freemen*, and in no Sense whatever the *SERVANTS OF MEN*; that in our *religious Capacity* we are *Servants only*, and *responsible only to him*; that in Regard to spiritual Dominion and Au-

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thority the Lord Christ *is all in all*. When Christian Preachers, on all fit Occasions, and convenient Opportunities freely and openly declare these, and the like equally obvious and momentous Truths, they pay deserved Honour to the glorious Author and Finisher of the Christian Faith in his Character as **LORD**. They preach under the *immediate and express Sanction of Inspiration*, and as the Apostles themselves preached.

Again, Christian Teachers may be properly said to preach the Author of their Religion as **LORD**, when under a lively Sense and full Conviction of his exalted Dignity, his high and uncontrollable Authority, they lay open to Men his *Laws*, and aim by every fit, well-grounded Argument to enforce Obedience to them; when they set forth the indispensable Obligations, which Men in general are under to bear this great and mighty **LORD in all Things**; and *to do whatsoever he hath commanded*; when they inculcate the absolute Necessity of universal Holiness both of Heart and Life towards obtaining his Ap-
probation,

DISCOURSE XI. 215

probation, and securing his favourable and complacential Regards; when they represent him, though infinitely compassionate and merciful to all *involuntary* and *unallowed* InfirmitieS, yet as peremptorily requiring a *conscientious* Respect to all his Precepts, and as the Author of Salvation to those only who sincerely obey him; not to those who merely *call him Lord*, but *do not his Will*, and *the Will of his Father, who is in Heaven.*

FINALLY, Christian Teachers conform to the Rule in the Text, not only when they preach CHRIST JESUS THE LORD, but also themselves, as the SERVANTS of Christians for JESUS SAKE.

When they frankly own themselves to be no more, and are ambitious of being regarded in no higher Light, than that of Servants, who are to labour by all proper Means for the Relief and real Welfare of Souls, prompted by Affection towards them and the Redeemer, by a Reverence for his Commands, and an earnest Desire to advance his Kingdom and Glory. When they publicly disclaim all Dominion over the

Faith and Conscience of their Hearers, and make it appear, on all Occasions, that they have no other, or higher Wish than to approve themselves as Promoters of their Peace, and *Helpers of their Joy*. And finally, when they shew a cheerful Disposition to *subserve* their Interest, and *to please them well in all Things*, as far as they judge consistent with their superior Obligations to their great Master and Lord.

Having thus far considered the Rule of Preaching laid down in the Text, I might now proceed to mention some Reasons and Motives to enforce a Conformity to it. It is a Rule of *distinguished Importance*, and ought to be most *carefully* attended to. If Christian Teachers will deviate from it, and affect to appear in any other, or higher Character, than that of the SERVANTS of Christians *for Jesus sake*, their preaching will be entirely *vain*, as to any Ends or Purposes worthy the Attention of *reasonable* and *responsible* Beings; and not only so, but it will be highly *injurious* and *detimental* both to themselves, and those to whom they preach.

If

DISCOURSE XI. 217

If Ministers are actuated by Motives of Ambition or Avarice, the Love of Power, or a contentious, wrathful, and uncharitable Disposition; “ The sagacious and “ discerning will be tempted to *despise* “ them, the resolute and spirited to *oppose* “ and *bumble* them, and the good and can-“ did will have ample Room to *pity* them.” But when the Teachers of Christianity, conscientiously and according to their best Understanding, preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and themselves only as the Servants of Christians for Jesus sake, they take the best and surest Method to *save both them-*
selves, and those who hear them; to befriend their *own true Interest*, to approve themselves to the Lord and Judge of all, and to promote the real Felicity of others; they act in Character, fulfil the End of their Ministry, *are Workmen that need not to be ashamed rightly dividing, and dispensing the Word of Truth*; screen themselves from all *just and deserved Contempt*, and pursue a Course that will naturally secure them all the Respect and Honour, that a *reasonable Ambition* can wish or conceive.

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218 DISCOURSE XI.

He, who acquits himself with Fidelity and Diligence, both as a Servant of Christ, and a Servant of Christians for his sake, is worthy of *double Honour*. But if a Christian Teacher, through Folly and Pride of Heart, should seek for any Honour *different from what attends the regular and faithful Discharge of the Duties of his Function*, and affect in an Office, which in its very Nature is wholly *ministerial*, to exercise *Dominion over his Fellow Christians*, such as the great among the Gentiles exercised over their Inferiors, he will be in Danger of incurring the high Displeasure of his Master and Lord, and of *falling into the Condemnation of the Devil*; and, if his Lot be cast in a peculiarly enlightened Age, of being generally *despised by Men*. *Ye know*, said our blessed Saviour to his Disciples, *that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are great exercise Authority upon them*. But it shall not be so among you: But whosoever will be **GREAT** among you, let him be your **MINISTER**. And whosoever will be **CHIEF** among you, let him be your **SERVANT**.

For

DISCOURSE XI. 219

For in my Kingdom, which is entirely spiritual, and *not of this World*, *he, that shall exalt himself, shall be abased; and he, that shall humble himself, shall be exalted.*

The Christian Preacher that would rise to any true *Greatness*, or attain any *substantial Honour*, must ever keep within his proper Sphere, act in perfect Consistence with the Nature of his Function, by *labouring diligently in the Word and Doctrine, shewing himself in all Things a Pattern of good Works*, and a willing, cheerful Servant of all, who serve the Lord Christ. *Who-soever shall do the Commandments of God, and shall teach Men so, the same shall be called GREAT in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

He shall secure the Esteem of all good and worthy Men, and what is of infinitely greater Moment, he shall be found of his Lord in Peace, and have *Praise of God.*

I shall now conclude with an Application of the Rule in the Text for the Benefit of Christian Hearers. By Means of this Rule Christians in general may most easily learn *how to hear.* And

i. If

1. If christian Teachers are not to preach themselves, it necessarily follows that, so far as they do so, such as attend their Ministrations are in no Degree to regard them; but if instead of *themselves*, they preach, as they ought to do, *Christ Jesus the Lord*, the divine Command to the Churches in general is, *he that hath an Ear to hear, let him bear*. Every Man of Reflection and Discernment must indeed have observed, that of Preaching *Christ Jesus the Lord* there are many and different Modes; and which of them is the best and nearest to the right has been more or less, in all Ages, a Subject of Disputation. A Teacher of more Confidence than Discretion may assert roundly, that his Mode of Preaching is absolutely right, and that every other is and must be wrong. But the boldest Assertion without Proof merits no Regard. He may perhaps with the View of supporting it lay Claim to an extraordinary Measure of the Spirit, which, he apprehends, must be allowed to lead him to Nothing but Truth, and to all Truth. But a Claim of so high and important

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DISCOURSE XI. 221

tant a Nature *unattested by Miracles* will, with all rational and judicious Men, pass for Nothing, and be looked upon as undeserving of any Credit.

And indeed, since the *Apostolic Age*, the only one renowned for Miracles, or for any *extraordinary spiritual Gift*, the Claim to Infallibility has been openly disavowed by Christian Instructors in *general* of good and *honest* Hearts, and of *cool* and *clear* Heads. The Pretensions of these *upright* and *sober* Men, in their utmost Extent, went no further than this; that their Method of teaching *appeared to themselves* to be *right*, and that they were animated with the humble Hope, that what appeared right to themselves was upon *the whole really so*. But they never set up their own Instructions, or their *own Explications* of the Christian Doctrine, as *infallible Standards* of Christian Truth. This Honour they wholly ascribed to the Scriptures, and ever recommended it to their Hearers, to judge for themselves how far their teaching was *really right* and *agreeable to these*: and when they found them freely exerci-
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222 DISCOURSE XI.

sing their own Judgment, they never failed to commend them for the *Nobleness* of their Spirit, and to regard them as *wise* and *rational* Men, who were pursuing the *only effectual Measures* to guard against every dangerous Error, and to attain the Knowledge of all *useful* and *important* Truths.

If Christian Hearers would then know when the Teachers of Christianity preach Christ Jesus the Lord in a *right Manner*, let them *Search the Scriptures* and *use their own Understanding*. They are endued with Reason and Intelligence, let them freely and candidly *judge* what is said, and so far only as it appears to themselves to be right and agreeable to Truth, let them follow it. Let them *prove* or try *all Things* by the Law and the Testimony, and what appears to them, upon a fair and candid Examination, to be *good* and worthy of Credit, let them cordially receive and strictly adhere to. Let them ever have a Desire to the *sincere, genuine, unmixed, undulterated Milk of the Word*, and regard the holy Scriptures in their own native Form, *unexpounded, and unparaphrased*, as the *only*

only certain Rule both of Christian Faith and Christian Practise; that henceforth they be no more Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the Sleight of Men, and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, but receiving and keeping the Truth in Love, may grow up into him in all Things, who is the HEAD even CHRIST. Whatever appears to them to be Christian Truth, let them regard it, not as the Word of Men, but as the Word of God; and shew that they so regard it by being Doers of it; and not Hearers only deceiving their own selves.

2. FINALLY, Christian Hearers may further avail themselves of the Apostolic Rule in the Text for the Regulation of their own Conduct, as it directs Christian Teachers to *preach themselves as the SERVANTS of Christians for JESUS sake.* If bound openly to make such a Profession, those who hear them must clearly perceive, that they are in no Sense whatever to consider them as *Masters and Lords,* or as having any Shadow of Dominion over God's Heritage.

But

But if Christian Preachers are really the Servants of Christians for Jesus sake, and ought so to be regarded by all Christian People; how then are we to understand that celebrated Text in Heb. xiii. 17. in which Christians are exhorted to *obey them that have the Rule over them, and to submit to them?* Whatever may be the *true* and *precise* Meaning of these Words and of some others of a *similar* Sound, that we meet with in the apostolic Writings, it is doubtless perfectly *consistent* with our Text and the high Character, which our Saviour sustains *as the only Lord and Master of Christians.* And whatever Authority these spiritual Rulers, or to speak more agreeably to the original, whatever Authority these spiritual *Leaders* or *Guides* may be supposed to have had, it certainly was not greater than that of the *Apostles.*

The Apostles were without Question, after Christ, the *very highest* Order of Christian *Preachers*, as they preached by a Commission immediately derived from Christ, and under the *infallible Guidance* of his Spirit; yet *they disclaimed* all *Dominion* over

DISCOURSE XI. 225

over the *Faith* of Christians, never pretended, of their own *Authority*, to dictate what they should *believe* or *do*; nor to prescribe any one *Term* of *Salvation* or even of christian *Communion* and *Fellowship*, but such as Christ himself had previously *prescribed* to them. They published no *Laws* or *Doctrines* of their own; and would have deemed it a very arrogant Presumption, by their own mere *Authority*, to create any new *Duties*, to establish one single *Rite* or *Ceremony*, or to make any *Practices* whatever *necessary*, that were in their own *Nature* *indifferent*, and much more to injoin any Thing to be done that was in itself *sinful*; well knowing that, in every Instance, God was to be obeyed rather than Men, and that he would never accept of any Thing in *Religion* but what he himself had required.

The only Authority to which they made any *Pretensions*, and with which they were really invested, was an Authority to preach the *Gospel* in the very same *Form*, in which they received it from

Q Christ,

226 DISCOURSE XI.

Christ, and as his unerring Spirit gave them Light and Utterance, *without detracting any Thing from it, or adding one jot or Tittle to it*; to preach *it*, and not any *human* fallible and uninspired *Explications* of it, *as the only Rule both of Christian Faith and Christian Practice*, and to use their best Endeavours, to prevail on all who heard them cordially to receive it, and to form their Temper and Conduct by it: In the *Exercise* of this Authority, they constantly considered themselves, and desired to be considered by all others, not as the *Lord's* but as the *Servants* of Men for *Jesus sake*.

Such as has been now represented was the Authority of the *apostolic Preachers*, an Authority indeed very confined and limited, if compared to what has been *assumed* by many Christian Preachers, in some latter Times, but yet vastly *superior*, in certain Respects, to what any *modern Teachers* can *justly claim*. As none can now pretend to act by a *Commission* derived *immediately* from Christ, or to preach under the *unerring Guidance of Inspiration*

DISCOURSE XI. 227

Inspiration, so all, that Christian Preachers can rationally propose and are *really authorized* to do at present, is to lay before their Hearers, in the best Manner they are able, *the Truth as it is in Jesus*, or *the Christian Doctrine itself, as left on Record in the New Testament*, by such as were *divinely inspired* and *infallible Teachers* of it; and to endeavour with Humility, Seriousness, and Earnestness, to persuade Men to embrace it, and to live agreeably to it. By these Means they ought to approve themselves the *faithful Servants* of Christ; and for his sake, of all who hear them. And provided Christian Preachers will thus acquit themselves, it is certain their *Hearers* one and all *owe* them the most cheerful *Obedience*; an Obedience indeed essentially different in Nothing from what the greatest Man upon Earth owes to the meanest of his Servants, who in Meekness of Wisdom reminds him of his *Duty*, or humbly endeavours to *persuade* him, when in the wrong, to *act right*. In this Sense Christians in general are indispensably obliged to *submit*

Q 2

themselves

themselves not only to the public Teachers of Christianity, but also *one to another*.

Having now, I humbly trust, shewn with sufficient clearness, how consistent every Authority which Christian Instructors can reasonably and justly claim, is with the Title given them as the SERVANTS of Christians; and the solid Foundation which all Christian People have to regard them as *such*, and in no Sense whatever as their *Masters* and *Lords*; I would in the next place, observe that tho' they *may*, and *ought* ever to consider them as their *Servants*; that they are not to look upon *them*, any more than *themselves*, as Persons sunk into a State of ignominious Servitude, or subject to any Yoke of Bondage; but to esteem them, as well as themselves, as the Lord's *Freemen*, and *their Servants only for Jesus sake*, to promote his Religion, and spiritual Kingdom in, and among them.

This being their *true and proper Office*, Such as attend their Ministrations have no Reason to *despise them for their Work sake*, or to expect any Kind of *Service* from them, but such as is perfectly consistent with their

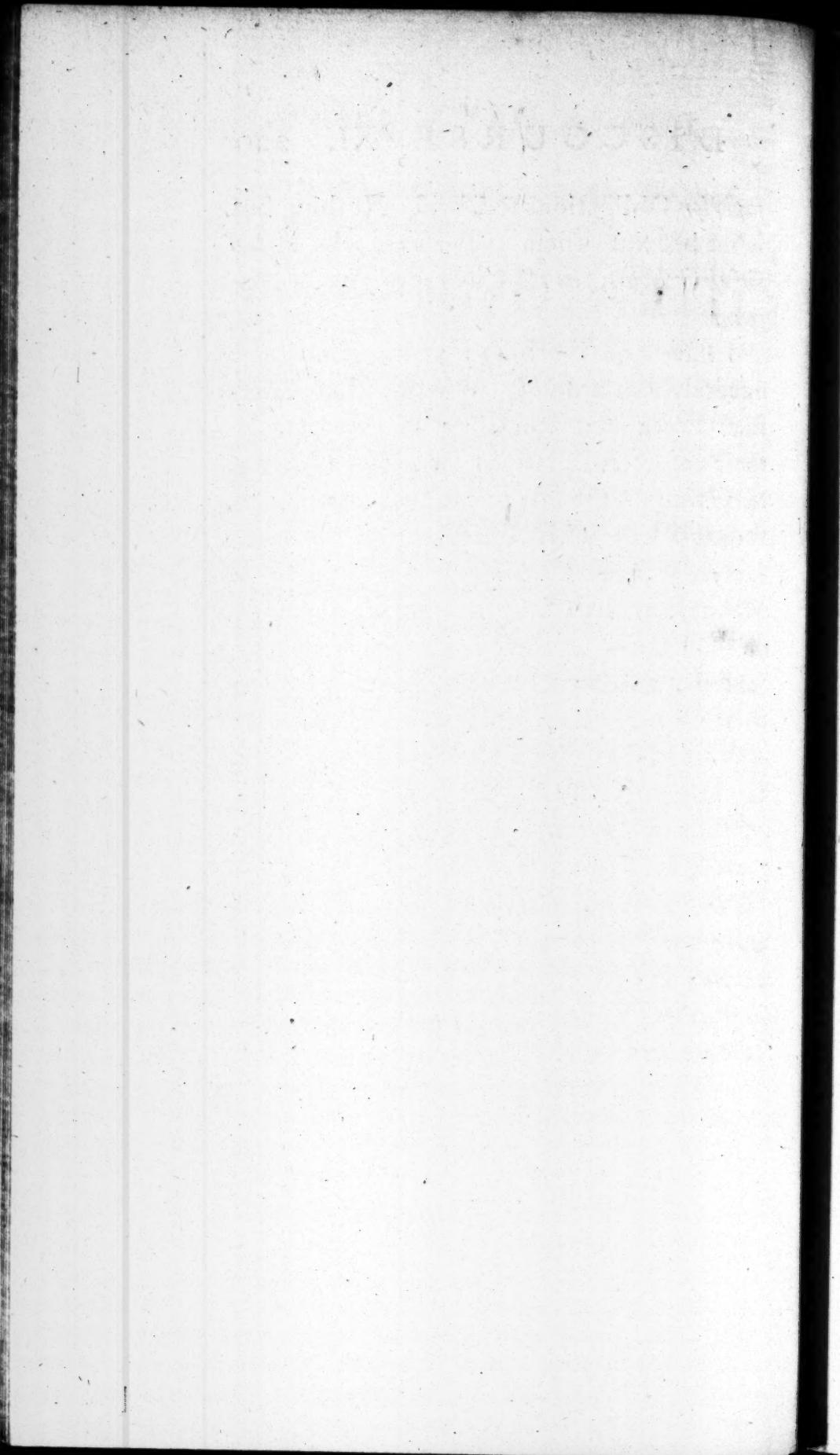
superior

DISCOURSE XI. 229

superior Obligations to Christ: Nothing but what becomes them as Persons, who watch for their Souls, as those who must give an Account.

I have now Nothing remaining but most sincerely and ardently to wish, that Christian Preachers, and Christian Hearers, in their respective Stations, may have Mercy to be found faithful; to conduct themselves through Life with Integrity and Honour, Decency and Propriety, and in such a Manner, as shall tend most highly to adorn the Doctrine of their common Lord and Saviour, and most effectually to promote their own spiritual and immortal Interests; as shall best fit them for the Inheritance of Saints above, and for the Society and Fellowship of just and upright Spirits made perfect in Virtue, Felicity, and Glory.

Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our Sins in his own Blood, and hath made us ALL Kings and Priests unto God and his Father, to him be Glory and DOMINION, for ever and ever. Amen.



DISCOURSE XII.

Occasioned by the Death of a near
and honoured Relation, to whom
the Character in the Text was
generally thought, by such as
best knew him, to be peculiarly
applicable.



PSALM XXXVII. 37.

Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright: For the End of that Man is Peace.

IN these Words two Things are peculiarily worthy our Observation.

First, An EXHORTATION. Mark the perfect Man, and behold the Upright.

Secondly, The REASON upon which it is grounded; For the End of that Man is Peace.

232 DISCOURSE XII.

The *First* Thing observable in the Words is an Exhortation; *Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright.*

In Order to attain a more clear, and adequate Idea of it, I propose to give a short Description of a *perfect* and an *upright Man*; and then inquire what is implied in marking and beholding him.

Perfect and *upright* are often used, in the sacred Writings, as synonymous Terms, signifying *sincere* or *honest*. That the Term *upright* has this Signification, and especially in the Text, is sufficiently obvious. By an *upright Man* is here manifestly intended a *Man of Sincerity*, a *Man* in whose Spirit there is no *Guile* or *Hypocrisy*. An *upright Man* possesses Truth in the inward Parts, a Heart without Deceit. He is a Person of unaffected Simplicity and Plainness, one who will in no Instance deceive you, how unable soever he may be to befriend, or serve you. He always is what he would *seem*, and profess himself to be. He ever *means well*, and *intends good*. In every Circumstance, and on all Occasions, he truly desires and aims

to act

to act agreeably to the very best Light of his own Mind, and the Will of God. His *Heart* is ever *right*; right in the Sight and Estimation of that infinitely glorious Being, who is all perfect and all knowing.

Such in short is the Character of an *up-right Man*; and upon the Supposition, that the Word *perfect*, as well as *upright*, does here signify *sincere*, as it undoubtedly does in various other Places, such is the Character of a *perfect Man*. *Sincerity* is the greatest human Excellence, that without which there can be no Virtue or Religion, nothing *intrinsically* good, and Praiseworthy; it is the *grand Term* of our *Acceptance*; and a truly *sincere Man* may not improperly be styled a *perfect Man*, and the Term *perfect* is frequently used with Propriety to signify *sincere*.

Of the several Places, where it is thus used, I shall mention only the two following. The one is in 2 Kings xx. 3. where King *Hezekiah*, speaking of himself in a solemn and devout Address to the Deity, says, I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now, how I have walked before thee in Truth,

Truth, and with a *perfect* Heart. The other is in 2 Chron. xxv. 22. Where King *Amaziah* is spoken of as having done that, which was *right in the Sight of the Lord*, but not with a *perfect* Heart; i. e. a *sincere*, or an upright Mind.

But though the Word *perfect* frequently signifies *sincere*, yet in the Text it may have an Acceptation somewhat different, and ought probably to be considered as having a more direct Reference to the *outward* Conversation, as the Term *upright* has to the *inward* Frame and Disposition of the Mind. Taking the Word in this Sense, by a *perfect Man* we may understand one, who from a good and an honest Heart leads a virtuous and a holy Life; and, instead of being *partial* in his Obedience to the divine Will, has a constant Respect to *all the Commandments of God*. One, who is, *upon the whole unblamable* in all holy Conversation and Godliness; not living in the *allowed* Omission of any known Duty, or Commission of any known Sin. One I say, who, upon the *whole* and in the *general* Course of his Life, is *blameless*.

DISCOURSE XII. 235

blameless. For no Man is, and no Man ever was *perfect*, in the *strict* and *absolute* Sense of the Word.

Whatever Progress any Man has made in Holiness and Virtue, yet if he were to say I am *absolutely perfect* and *without Sin*, his own Mouth would condemn him, and prove him a Liar. There is none *perfectly righteous*, no not one. It is indeed said that every one, *who worketh Righteousness*, *is righteous even as God is righteous*; but this must be understood only *comparatively*; for there is no righteous Man, *who worketh Righteousness* so *completely* and *constantly*, as in no Instance, or Degree to *sin*. The Truth is, that in too many Things the *best* and *most perfect* of Men offend.

But though *no Man* is *absolutely perfect*, yet whoever is *perfect*, according to the Sense of the Word in our Text, possesses a *truly excellent Character*, a Character, I apprehend, but little short of *sinless Perfection*. He keeps the Ways of the LORD with remarkable *Steadiness*, and *wickedly departs not* in any Instance from his God. He so far keeps the *whole Law*, as never
allowedly

236 DISCOURSE XII.

allowedly and habitually to offend in any one Point. As he is truly upright, thoroughly honest and sincere, so he is *innocent* with Respect to all *presumptuous Sins, and great Transgressions.* He is, in short, a Man approved and accepted of God, free from Condemnation, and really entitled to an inconceivably glorious Recompence of Reward.

Such is the Character of an *upright and perfect Man*; a Character, which all Men ought to be ambitious of attaining, and which some in every Age have actually attained. Among others, who have sustained this noble, this eminently ornamental, and most worthy Character, in the former Ages of the World, *Noah* and *Job* shone with distinguished Lustre. It is expressly said of them that they were *just, upright and perfect Men.* They kept themselves *unspotted from the World;* through all Revolutions held fast their Integrity, and in Spite of all Temptations were, upon the whole, and to an *eminently high Degree, complete in Righteousness and unblamable in Holiness.*

And

DISCOURSE XII. 237

And Men of *similar* Worth and Excellence of Character we ourselves *have known*, Men, who were a real Ornament to human Nature, who, in a *right* Course were *stedfast* and *unmoveable*, conducting themselves through all the various Scenes of Life with distinguished Dignity and Honor, who *now* inherit Immortality, shining as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father, and whom we surviving Mortals, in this World, shall *know no more*. They are beyond Conception happy, for they died *in the LORD*, and are now present *with the LORD*.

But though they are dead, blessed be God, Truth and Righteousness died not with them. Some of a similar Spirit, and of the like irreproachable Behaviour we *still know*. *Whilſt* we have them *with us*, let us carefully and attentively *observe* them; for in a little Time the Places, which at *present* know *them*, *will know them no more*. *Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright*; which naturally leads me to inquire what is to be understood by *marking* and *beholding* him.

i. By

238 DISCOURSE XII.

1. By marking and beholding him is manifestly signified that we endeavour, as much as we *prudently*, and conveniently can, to *associate* with him.

The Company, and Conversation of an upright and perfect Man can never be *detrimental* to any, but may be highly *beneficial* to all. *To walk with wise Men; to be a Companion of all those, who fear the LORD and keep his Precepts; of those, who are perfect in their Way and walk uprightly;* is one excellent Guard against Vice and Folly, a powerful Incentive to a virtuous and well regulated Course of acting, and one good Mark of true Wisdom. But further,

2. As we ought, as far as is consistent with Prudence and Conveniency, to cultivate an Intimacy and Acquaintance with the upright and perfect, the wise and honest Man, so the *Exhortation* to mark and behold him evidently implies, that we should very carefully and attentively *observe* him; observe his Spirit and Temper, and the whole Tenor of his Conversation.

We ought to observe him in all his Ways, in his Family, the Church and civil

DISCOURSE XII. 239

civil Life, in Prosperity and Adversity, in every Station and Relation, which he so honourably and worthily fills. An upright and a perfect Man is the noblest Work of God; the brightest *Image* of that great and glorious Being, who is infinitely *lovely*. He is a living Transcript of every Virtue, every Thing good, amiable, and Praise worthy.

In his *Family* you will find him walking before God in the Sight of his *House*, commanding, with all becoming Firmness, and probably with some good Success, his Children and Servants to practise universal Virtue, and steadily to keep the Ways of the LORD. Enter his Habitation, and you will find it the Habitation of Righteousness and Peace, and all attainable Regularity and Order. No Man can be so reasonably supposed to rule his *House* well, as the *upright* and *perfect* *Man*.

Attend him further to the Church, and the House of God. There in all the *stated* Seasons of solemn Worship, you will be sure to find him, and to find him a truly *devout*

240 DISCOURSE XII.

devout and cheerful Worshipper. As he serves God in Sincerity, and with no base and sinister Views, so, instead of imitating the formal, hypocritical Pharisees, who disfigured their Faces and were of sad Countenances, he serves him with Gladness; with unaffected Pleasure and all decent Alacrity of Spirit. He is a Man, whose Devotion is perfectly rational, and in no Degree ostentatious. And as he possesses an enlarged Mind, and a benevolent Disposition, so he is never obstinately attached to his own Humours, and intent on pleasing himself only, but studies and cordially approves the Things, which make for Peace, and the Things, which tend to the most general Edification.

Follow him again into the *World*, or the Engagements of *civil Life*. He is not only harmless; and inoffensive, but cheerfully disposed, according to his Opportunities, and in Proportion to his Abilities, to promote the good of all Men. He is both in his more private and more public Capacity a real and distinguished Blessing.

View

DISCOURSE XII. 241

View him in *Prosperity*, and in the most elevated Station, you will never find him behaving, as one not knowing *who is the Lord*, or as one who vainly thinks he has no *Superior*. You will always find him perfectly sober, never thinking more highly of himself, or more meanly of others, than he *ought to think*.

Behold him also in the opposite Scenes of Adversity and Trouble. He is still Master of himself; possesses his Soul in Patience; discovers neither a stupid Insensibility, nor any *unmanly Dejection of Spirits*; he neither *despises the Chastening of the Lord*, nor is he impatiently weary of *his Correction*.

He is in Thought, Word, and Deed, and through the general Course of his Life, so far what a Man *ought to be*; so virtuous and amiable, and so truly deserving of Applause, that no candid, considerate Mind can do less than highly esteem and venerate him, or can contemplate his Character without feeling peculiar Pleasure.

R

Having

Having thus seen in some Degree the Manner of his *Life*, suppose we attend him to the Gates of *Death*, and observe his *End*. But this we must endeavour to do, without too much anticipating what will more naturally claim our Attention under the second general Head.

It is indeed *painful*, and in some Circumstances especially, *inexpressibly painful* to see an upright and perfect Man breathing his *last*; to see him quitting the World, his Relations, and his Friends for ever; but yet it may be peculiarly *instructive* and exceedingly *profitable*. To see that very Kind of Death, which every Man in his sober Senses must fervently *wish* to be his *own*; a Death disarmed of its *Sting* and every Power to *burt*, must have a natural Tendency to *impress* the Mind in the *very best* Manner, and to afford some Lessons of the *truest Wisdom*.

How much soever the *Heart of Fools*, of the giddy and inconsiderate may be in the *House of Mirth*, in gay and joyous Scenes; yet the most intelligent of Men hath told us, that the *Heart of the wise*, of those,

DISCOURSE XII. 243

those, who best understand their own true Interest, *is in the House of Mourning.* He hath also informed us, that *Sorrow is better than Laughter,* and that it is better, more safe and more beneficial to go to the *House of Mourning* than to go to the *House of Feasting:* For by the *Sadness of the Countenance* the *Heart is made better,* and the *House of Mourning is the End of all Men,* which ought to be most seriously and attentively considered by *all living.* This being the Case, let us willingly enter the *House of Mourning,* especially if there dwells the *upright and perfect Man.* Let us accompany him in the last Scenes of Mortality, and see in what Manner he encounters his last Enemy, and passes out of one World into another. *As he lived not, so he dieth not, to himself.* But as he lived unto the *LORD;* so he dieth unto the *LORD:* And as when living, he was the *LORD's,* so now, when dying, he is the *LORD's.* *The Righteous hath Hope in his Death;* a Hope better established than all the Pillars of Heaven, and all the Foundations of the Earth.

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To

To see a Fellow-mortal die *in Hope*, to bear him perhaps declaring, with some peculiar Confidence, that he has no real Evil to fear, and that Death to him is Gain, how cheering! how affecting! who, that is wise, capable of serious and truly solid Reflection, would not be a Witness to a Death so glorious, a Death, whatever humiliating Circumstances may attend it, so exceedingly honourable to human Nature? Who would not wish such a Death *his own*? Whatever befalls me in Life, let me die the Death of the righteous, and let my last End, and future State, be like unto his.

Having thus observed the *upright* and *perfect Man*, both in his Life, and in his Death; the Exhortation to mark and behold him may further imply, that *when dead*, we should by no Means forget him.

The Memory of the righteous is *precious*. It is pleasing, it is profitable, when he himself, as to this World, is no more, to rescue his Character from Oblivion, to review the Course of his Life, and the Manner of his Death. If, when *dead*, he
lives



DISCOURSE XII. 245

lives not in our *Memories*, with Respect to us he both lived, and died in *vain*. Whoever has through Life sustained the Character of an *upright* and *perfect Man*, deserves to be had in *everlasting Remembrance*, and to be held up as a *Pattern* to his Children's Children, and even to all succeeding Generations. And indeed, if we have ever *known* such a Man when *living*; especially if we have *seen* such a Man *die*; I believe it will be *impossible* to forget him. The *Impression*, which our Hearts have received, must be *deep*, and can never be *erased*; we *do*, and always *shall remember* him. Though *dead*, he yet *speaketh*; speaketh the Language of Wisdom, and sound Understanding; may we most *seriously attend* to it, and *duly profit* by it. And this leads me to observe, that the Exhortation to mark the *perfect Man*, and to behold the *upright*.

Further, and *principally* signifies, that we ought so attentively to consider the Course of his Life, and the Manner of his Death, and so *respectfully* remember him when *dead*, as to be powerfully and

R 3 . . . effectually

246 DISCOURSE XII.

effectually excited to a *careful Imitation* of him.

If we *mark, observe, and remember* him, to any valuable Purpose, we shall be so impressed with a Sense of his superior Wisdom and Virtue, as to be rendered truly solicitous to *lead his Life*, to the End we may die *his Death*, and be admitted into those everlasting Mansions, where the Spirits of all just Men are made *absolutely perfect*. Agreeable to this is the Apostolic Advice: God will not forget your Work and Labour of Love, which ye have shewed, and do shew towards his Name: we desire therefore that every one of you do shew the same Diligence to the full Assurance of Hope unto the End: that ye be not slothful, but *Followers of those*, who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises.

The same Road, through which they travelled, is *open to us*; let us tread in their Steps, be *Followers of them*, as they were of Christ, the perfect Pattern of all Righteousness, that we may again associate with them, and be for ever filled with their Company:

DISCOURSE XII. 247

pany: that we, and they may rejoice together with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory, rejoice in each others *unalterable Felicity*, and *jointly celebrate* the exceeding Riches of his Grace, whose Goodness *Exceeds all Praise*. Having thus considered the *Exhortation to mark the perfect Man*, and to *behold the upright*; I propose

II. In the next Place to expatiate on the *Reason*, upon which it is grounded, and with which it is enforced, namely, *for the End of that Man is Peace.*

And here I shall briefly consider what we are to understand by the perfect and upright Man's *End*; and then shew that his End is *Peace*.

By his *End* we may naturally, and justly understand both his *Death* and future *State*.

1. By the perfect and upright Man's End we may very properly understand his Death.

Death is, in a certain Sense with regard to this Life, the *End of all Men*, good and bad, just and unjust. Agreeable to this is the Language of the Royal Preacher. It

248 DISCOURSE XII.

is better to go to the House of *Mourning*, than to go to the House of Feasting, for *that is the End of all Men*. The *End* of the upright and perfect, as well as of all others. *It is appointed for Men*, of all Ranks, and Characters, *once to die*. *In Adam all die*.

But though Death is very properly the *End* of the righteous, as well as the wicked, yet we are by no Means to consider Death as the *End* of a good Man in the most *important Sense*, or his *final Lot*. To observe his *End* in this more important View, we must follow him in Contemplation, or with the Eyes of Faith, to *another State beyond Death*, a State *immutable and eternal*.

Though the good Man is subject to Death like other Men, yet if we would see his *whole End*, we shall find that it comprehends in it, not only Death, but also an *everlasting Life*. Though Death destroy his Body, yet his Soul it *toucheth not*. Whenever his *earthly Tabernacle* is dissolved, the Soul descends not with it down to the Earth, but *returns to God who gave it*.

DISCOURSE XII. 249

it. The *Soul* of the *righteous*, when *absent* from the *Body*, is *present* with the *LORD*, fixed there, where Death can never come. And in *due Season*, a *Season* already *determined* by the infinitely wise Disposer of our Lot, the *Body* shall be loosed from the Bondage of Corruption, and raised incorruptible and glorious, and in a Form, that will render it, in every Respect, a fit Habitation for the perfectly pure and immortal Spirit. Then Death shall be *utterly abolished*, swallowed up in *Victory*, swallowed up of Life and an infinitely blessed Immortality.

Agreeable to this the Hebrew Word *Acherith*, which has been translated *End*, in the Text, may be rendered, according to the Judgment of some learned Men, *future State*. Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for the *End* of that Man is Peace. Whatever his Circumstances in this Life may be, his Death and *future State* will be *peaceful* and *blessed*. His *Death* will be *blessed*; a real Benefit, a most happy Event.

But

250 DISCOURSE XII.

But we are not hence to infer that it will be attended with no *Pain*. The Death of him, who fulfilled all *Righteousness*, and knew no *Sin*, and in whom God was perfectly well pleased, was *painful*, painful beyond Description. In Regard to *Pain*, the Death of the wicked may sometimes be much *happier*, and more *eligible* than that of the righteous. The *perfect* and *upright* may have just Reason to say, that to die is the *hardest* and most *painful* of all Works, whereas Men of a contrary Character may have, as the Psalmist expresses it, *no Bands in their Death*. “ *These* “ *may not be afflicted with any sore Dis-* “ *eases, nor brought to their Graves with* “ *Pains and Torment; but after a long Life* “ *in firm and vigorous Health, depart* “ *easily out of the World.*”

Further, from the Account given in the Text of the perfect and upright Man’s End, it cannot, I apprehend, be necessarily inferred, that he *always* dies with a *Mind in perfect Ease*, much less cheered with any extraordinary Measures of Consolation. As he may have passed through

Life

DISCOURSE XII. 251

Life in Darkness, with his Spirits depre-
sed and his Mind weighed down by *Melan-*
choly, so it is not *impossible* he may die as he
lived, and never attain very *sensible* and
comfortable Measures of that Light and
Peace, to which he is *entitled* and for
which he is *designed*, till he has passed the
Vale of Death, and arrived in the Regions
of perfect Day. I do not see, *notwith-*
standing what is said in the Text concern-
ing the peaceful and happy End of the
righteous, but this *may* have been the
Case, sometimes, with such as *truly feared*
the Lord, and most *sincerely obeyed his*
Voice. Isaiah l. 10. But be this as it may,
it is certain that the good Man's Death is
always in itself truly blessed, and *often* in
many of its *Circumstances* also peculiarly
peaceful and happy.

SUPPOSE we saw the good Man in the
utmost Extremity of bodily Pain, and
having in himself the *Sentence of Death*,
yet possessing his Soul in the most perfect
and exemplary Patience, *anxious only to*
glorify that God in his *Death*, to whom
he had so cheerfully and sincerely devoted
his

his Life ; *anxious only* to die so as to give those around him no Occasion to think *unfavourably*, or *unbecomingly*, either of God or his Ways; and in a Manner the most likely to befriend the important Interest of true Religion, and to leave good Impressions on the Minds of Survivors.

SUPPOSE we find him, when his bodily Strength is in a Manner exhausted, collecting what remains in Order to make a *last Address* to his Children, and Family, and surrounding Friends.

“ Once, through the extreme Violence
 “ of my Pains, I was almost tempted to
 “ think, that my God had *forsaken me*,
 “ but, blessed be his Name, he is *now*
 “ *come*. — My dear *Children*, my Strength
 “ is gone,— yet Something, if able, and
 “ and I well knew how; Something, in
 “ particular, I would say to *you*—before I
 “ take my final Leave of you — and bid
 “ *you* my *last Adieu*.”

“ Seek *first*, above and before *all*
 “ *Things*, the Kingdom of God, and his
 “ Righteousness; and all other *Things*
 “ shall be added unto *you*. — Whatever
 “ *you*

DISCOURSE XII. 253

“ you do, and whatever befalls you,
“ SERVE GOD.—Serve him with your
“ *whole Heart*, and through your *whole*
“ *Life*; and use also your best Endeavours
“ to train up your Children in his Ser-
“ vice, and for his Glory.—LOVE ONE
“ ANOTHER, and on *all* Occasions do *all*,
“ that you can to *befriend* and *assist* each
“ other.—BE WISE AND HONEST.
“ This is what I ever *aimed* to be myself.
“ To my *Integrity* my Conscience now
“ bears Witness.—Of all Guile and Hy-
“ pocrify, Unfairness and mean Subtilty,
“ my Heart acquits me.—My rejoicing
“ is this, that in Simplicity, and godly
“ Sincerity I have had my Conversation
“ in the World.—And as it was my con-
“ stant Endeavour to walk *uprightly*, and
“ to sustain the Character of an *honest*
“ *Man*, to keep clear of all *by Ends*, and
“ *sinister Views*, in my Transactions both
“ with God and Men; so it has been my
“ *Desire*, and *Study*, on all Occasions, to
“ behave *wisely*. BE YE THEREFORE
“ WISE AND HONEST.—May God al-
“ ways preserve you; and it is, in a more
especial

“ especial Manner my Heart’s Desire, and
“ most earnest Prayer that, through all
“ the Trials of Life, and all its various
“ Scenes, he may keep fast hold of your
“ infinitely precious and immortal Souls—
“ Now my Children, GOD ALMIGHTY
“ BLESS YOU. — God bless you with the
“ best Blessings, with Blessings everlasting.
“ —May God, who fills both Earth and
“ Heaven, the God of my Salvation, my
“ Hope, and my Confidence, be present
“ with, and — BLESS YOU ALL.”

SUPPOSE at the Close of such a solemn and pathetic Address, you see the perfect and upright Man sink back on his Pillow, sink in Appearance into the very Arms of Death, and yet, after a certain Interval of Time, and before he really gives up the Ghost, you find him, like *Stephen*, discovering by a singular and unusual Emotion of Transport, that he saw the very Heavens opened; and hear him break out in the following or the like joyful Exclamation. *Wonderful! — Wonderful are the Things, which are in Heaven! They are unutterably glorious!* Vain, indeed, all earthly Things;

DISCOURSE XII. 255

Things; *vain World farewell.—Nothing can tempt my longer Stay.* — I come, I come,
LORD JESUS RECEIVE MY SPIRIT.

SUPPOSE we saw a Man of *exemplary* Piety and Virtue, a Man of *approved* Worth, and *intrinsic* Goodness; a *Brother*, a *FATHER*, a *FRIEND*, to whom our Interest had been *ever dear* as his *own*, making so triumphant an Exit out of this World to another infinitely better, could we help wishing ourselves in his Situation, or that our Warfare was completed, all our Concern with Earth finished, and *that we also were permitted to depart, and bear him Company?*—Suppose we were *Witnesses* to so interesting a Scene; *saw* a good Man *die* in some such Manner as has been now represented; should we not have solid Reason to pronounce, that his Death was *blessed* not only in *itself*, but also in several of its most important *Circumstances* peculiarly peaceful and happy!

But in whatever *Manner* the perfect Man dies, whether under a Cloud, and with a Mind perplexed with Doubts and Fears concerning his State, or under the

more

256 DISCOURSE XII.

more immediate Countenance of Heaven, and with a Heart cheered by the Testimony of a good Conscience, and the comfortable Hope of a blessed Immortality; *it is certain* that his End, his Death is *true* Peace, and an unspeakable Advantage; as it puts a final Period to all his Misery and Pain, and is an infallible Inlet to a World, where there is Fulness of Joy, and everlasting Pleasures. *Precious unto the LORD is the Death of his Saints*; the Death of all holy and virtuous Men.

To every good Man Death is in *Reality*, whatever it may be in *Appearance*, the *greatest Gain*. It may be said, with the utmost Truth and Propriety concerning him, *that the Day of his Death is better, far better, than the Day of his Birth*. He was born to Trouble; but he dies to be completely happy. *Blessed, perfectly and eternally blessed are all the dead, who die in the LORD*. They are infinitely removed from all Affliction and Sorrow, wear a Crown of ineffable Glory, and *inherit all Things*; all *possible*, and *more* than all conceivable Felicity. *Mark the perfect Man, and*

DISCOURSE XII. 257

and behold the upright, for the *End* of that Man is *Peace*; uninterrupted and everlasting *Peace*. He *rests from all his Labours*, all afflictive and painful Exercises both of Body and Mind. “ Nothing can be more fluctuating, and transitory, than the secular Dreams, and flattering Advantages of Sinners and Hypocrites: But observe the Man of strict Morals and generous Virtue, and closely attend to the sincere, humane, and merciful Man; though for a while, Storms may threaten, or Clouds of Adversity hang over him; yet, in general, his Mind shall be serene and peaceful, and a future State shall settle him to his entire Satisfaction, in perfect Security and Glory”.

“ Be always *honest*, and you cannot stray,
“ ’Tis Virtue leads the sure unerring Way;
“ The sacred Guide have ever in your Eye,
“ And then, or rise, or fall, or live or die, []
“ ’Tis right; ’tis God alone knows how to bless,
“ Whate’er the good Man meets with is Success.”

To the Man of unshaken Integrity, real
and unsullied Honour; to him, who be-
S haves

258 DISCOURSE XII.

haves himself wisely in a perfect Way; to him, who proceeds with Steadiness, and persevering Patience in the Paths of Righteousness, all the Events of Life will be productive of Good; with Respect to him, all *natural Evils* shall be converted into *Blessings*: Nothing shall offend, or really injure him, but every thing shall tend to promote his true Happiness; and when his Course on Earth is finished, he shall exchange this World of manifold Trials and unavoidable Sorrows for a World of Joy, Joy unspeakable and full of Glory. He shall enter the perfect and eternal Rest of God.

Whenever the righteous depart hence, they shall take an Angel's Flight, go to Mount Zion, and to the City of the living God; to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable Company of Angels, to the general Assembly, and Church of the first born, which are written in Heaven; to God the Judge of all, to the Spirits of just Men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new Covenant; there to sit with him on Thrones of Glory, ar-
innu-

rayed in Robes of perfect Righteousness; to be happy, *completely* and *unchangeably* happy in the Possession of what Eye hath never seen, nor Ear heard, and what hath never entered the Heart of Man to conceive. It doth not yet appear what the Righteous *shall be*; nor what those, who laudably finished their Course upon Earth, *at present are*. All we know is, that they *see God*, and are *perfectly blessed* in his Presence and Likeness: That they are fixed as Pillars in his Temple, and *shall go no more out*.

Would we be happy in the Knowledge, and Participation of their Felicity? We must run with Patience the same noble Race of Virtue, which they so happily completed, till we have also finished it. Then we shall see them *as they are*, not as through a Glass darkly, but *Face to Face*. Then shall we *know them* more perfectly, than we now know, or are known by each other; know fully and distinctly the *End* of the *upright and perfect Man*; and what that PEACE is, which at present *passeth all Understanding*.

260 DISCOURSE XII.

Therefore my beloved Brethren, my Friends, and Fellow Christians, be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, for as much as you know, and are certain, that your Labour is not, nor will be, in vain in the Lord.

D I S.

DISCOURSE XIII.

Being the Substance of two Dis-
courses delivered at WOTTON-
UNDEREDGE, February 6, 1756.
the Day appointed for a general
Fast on Occasion of the Earth-
quake at *Lisbon*, and the criti-
cal Situation of public Affairs.

PROVERBS XIV. 34.

*Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is
a Reproach to any People.*

SOLOMON, the Author of this Book of Proverbs, was the most illustrious Personage of the Age, in which he lived; the greatest and most powerful King, and the *wisest* of Men. We may therefore

justly conclude, that he was peculiarly well acquainted with the best Maxims of Government, and whatever had a Tendency to render a Kingdom flourishing and happy. And, in Fact, there never was a Kingdom or Nation happier and more prosperous than that which he governed. We are told that *all the Days of Solomon, Juda, and Israel dwelt safely, every Man under his Vine, and under his Figtree, from one End of the Land to the other, in the full and quiet Possession of his civil and religious Rights.* His Subjects were many, as the Sand, which is by the Sea, in Multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry. Having established his Throne in Righteousness and Wisdom, and ever upheld it by Mercy and Clemency, his Kingdom was raised to its meridian Glory, and abounded with every private and public Blessing. And so respectable an Idea the neighbouring Powers had conceived of him and his People, *that he had Peace on all Sides round about him all the Days of his Life.*

In the Text, this wise and mighty Prince, from the Reason of Things, his own

DISCOURSE XIII. 263

own Observation and Experience, and under the unerring Influence of Inspiration, informs us what has the most infallible Tendency, on the one Hand, to exalt any Nation, and on the other, to bring any People to Contempt and Ruin. *Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any People.* In attempting to discourse on these Words, in a Manner suitable to the solemn and important Occasion of our present Meeting, I propose

I. Briefly to shew, what is here meant by Righteousness, and what by Sin.

II. Then expatiate on the Considerations proposed in the Text as Motives to avoid the one, and practise the other; to which I shall add some others suggested by the present Occasion.

And finally conclude with a few Reflections.

I. I am briefly to shew, what is here meant by Righteousness, and what by Sin.

Righteousness, in its most enlarged Sense, comprehends the whole Duty of Man; the whole of Religion and Virtue. It signifies, in its full Extent and Latitude,

264 DISCOURSE XIII.

an uniform, persevering Conformity, both of Heart and Life, to the whole Will of God. And according to this extensive Acceptation of the Word, we are doubtless to understand it in the Text. It comprehends in it *whatever Things are true, whatever Things are honest, venerable and decent, whatever Things are just, whatever Things are pure, lovely, and of good Report;* In a Word, whatever Things are truly virtuous and Praise worthy.

The Meaning of the Term Righteousness being thus ascertained, it is obvious, that *Sin* denotes whatever is opposite or contrary to it; every Transgression, and Want of Conformity to the divine Will. Sin is here to be so understood as to comprehend all Things whatever, that *defile a Man.* Such as *evil Thoughts, Adulteries, Fornications, Murders, Thefts, Covetousness, Wickedness, Lasciviousness, an evil Eye, Blasphemy, Pride, Foolishness;* and, in short, all criminal Dispositions, and all iniquitous Practices. In Consequence of this brief Explication of the Terms Righteousness, and Sin, I shall proceed

II. To

DISCOURSE XIII. 265

II. To expatiate on the Considerations proposed in the Text as Motives to avoid the one, and practise the other.

Two very powerful Incentives to this are contained in the *Text*.

We are here told on the one Hand, that *Righteousness exalteth a Nation*, and on the other, that *Sin is a Reproach to any People*.

First, *Sin is a Reproach to any People*.

Sin is the Reproach, the greatest Reproach of Men, whether we consider them as *Individuals*, or as formed into *Societies*, and Members of the Body *Politic*. It is the great Thing which exposes them to Contempt and Ruin. Where it *prevails*, it is sufficient to render contemptible the greatest States and Kingdoms; and without Repentance and Reformation, will sooner or later most surely involve them in total Destruction. No State or Kingdom has been long able to stand before the Desolations, which are inseparable Attendants on Sin. What is become of those mighty Powers, which held the whole World in Awe; the *Egyptians, Assyrians, Babilonians, Persians, Grecians and Romans?* Sin successively

266 DISCOURSE XIII.

sively involved them in total and final Ruin.

Of the same malignant and destructive Nature is Sin to this Day. It ever was, and ever will be a Reproach to *any* People. And, in particular, is not Sin a Reproach to the *British Empire*? It is without Question its greatest, and indeed its *only* Reproach. It is the only Grievance of Moment, that a true Lover of his Country has Reason to complain of. The Removal of this is, in a Manner, the only Thing necessary to make us as great and happy as we can desire or conceive. Were this removed, we should not have the least Foundation to fear any Thing that our Enemies could do unto us. We are indeed as yet, notwithstanding our numerous Sins and manifold Vices, in Point of Felicity an unrivalled Nation. This we are according to the repeated and open Confessions of the wisest and most candid of our Enemies themselves. And were it not for our Sins, we might justly pronounce our envied and matchless Prosperity firm and immoveable like the great and everlasting Mountains.

DISCOURSE XIII. 267

Mountains. But, in the midst of our unparalleled Felicity, the great Reproach, which adheres to us as Sinners, must greatly afflict every well Wisher to our Country, and fill his Mind with many painful and alarming Apprehensions concerning the *Continuance* of it.

We are without Doubt a very sinful Nation, a People heavily laden with Iniquity; and may the Lord of his infinite Mercy grant that this our Reproach may be soon removed. *Britons return unto the Lord, from whom you have so foolishly and so ungratefully gone astray. Return with one Heart this Day. Break off your Sins by Repentance, amend your Ways and your Doings; that Iniquity may not be your Ruin.*

The Cry of our manifold Offences has undoubtedly gone up to Heaven; and if we are not dealt with far otherwise than our Iniquities deserve, we may justly expect some signal Marks of the divine Displeasure. Our Reproach is open, and cannot be hid: Every Eye perceives that it is exceeding great. None therefore

will

will think me guilty of exposing the *Nakedness* of my Country, or deficient in good Will to the Public, if with a View of exciting us to a becoming *Sense* of our own and others Sins, and to greater *Fervency* and *Earnestness* in imploring heavenly Mercy; I should expatiate a little on the present Guilt of our Land, which bears so unfavourable an Aspect on the *Continuance* of its Prosperity.

Those Times, in Scripture, are emphatically styled *perilous Times*, when Men shall be *Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God*. If so, what are we to think of the Times in which we live? The irregular and excessive Love of Pleasure is the Bane of every Virtue, and what tends to ruin the amplest Fortune. To support and gratify it, in all its Wildness and Extravagancies, what Funds are sufficiently large? And towards the Forming of these, what Measures so base and villainous which are not too frequently taken? If so, have we not Reason to be alarmed at the *Prevalence* of this Vice at this Time in *Britain*? And the Ascendency which in one Shape

DISCOURSE XIII. 269

Shape and another, it has gained, together with other Vices, over its Inhabitants? To descend to some Particulars,

i. When was it that this capital and most destructive Sin, especially in that Form of it, which is peculiarly opposite to Holiness, and so justly entitles it to the Denomination of *Uncleanness* and *Filthiness*, abounded more than in this Age?

What Multitudes are there, if one may judge by their excessive Greediness to work all Kinds of Impurity, and their Contempt of Shame, who seem passed the *Sense of Guilt*? Who, instead of feeling Pain and Remorse for this their Sin and Reproach, *glory* in it. Such is the Vanity of their Minds, the Darkness and Blindness of their Hearts, that they imagine their Debaucheries and Excesses add to their Reputation, and give them a just Title to universal Praise. *Are these ashamed when they have committed Abominations? nay they are not at all ashamed, neither can they blush.* But hath not God expressly pronounced concerning Persons of a Character so abandoned, and so reproachful to his

270 DISCOURSE XIII.

his reasonable Creation, that *they shall fall among them that fall?* Is it not said, in so many Words, that *Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge?* Yet what Numbers testify by their Conduct, that they are absolutely deaf to these, and all other Threatnings of God's Word, though ever so awful and alarming? *Because Sentence against their Sin is not executed speedily, therefore their Hearts are fully set in them to do Evil.* What God himself hath pronounced *honourable in all*, in the Opinion of these Men is the Height of Disgrace; and there is not perhaps a greater Abomination in their Sight, than *the Bed undefiled*. Our Land is defiled, and in imminent Danger of being polluted more and more. If God is not pleased to interpose in Mercy to those who have been hitherto preserved from the reigning Pollutions, there is too much Reason to fear, that in a few Years the Plague will become general, and that the Land will be provoked to *vomit out her Inhabitants*.

But further, are there not too many who declare their Sin as *Sodom*, concerning

DISCOURSE XIII. 271

ing whom it may be said, as it was of old concerning the Inhabitants of that abandoned City, *that they are wicked, emphatically so, and Sinners before the Lord exceedingly; that their Sin is very great, and the Cry of it exceeding great?* If God was to reckon with our Nation only for the Sin of Uncleanness, in all its odious Forms, what desolating Judgments might we not justly expect to fall upon us? But

2. What a prodigious additional Weight of Guilt, our Land lies under, by Reason of its Intemperance? How prevalent the Sin of Drunkenness, especially among the inferior Ranks of People? There was a Woe formerly pronounced against the *Drunkards of Ephraim*, and what Reason have we to think, that there is not a Woe in Reserve for the like Sinners in *Britain*? It is certain that God, whose Eyes are in every Place, beholding the Evil and the Good, seeth all their Abominations; seeth the Misery and Wretchedness, which they have brought upon their Families and Dependents; and no Doubt but that the reiterated Cries and Lamentations of their helpless

helpless Offspring, extorted from them through Hunger and Nakedness, are gone up to Heaven for a Memorial against them.

Would the Sons of Intemperance know their Guilt and Danger; let them read the Doom of the unfaithful Steward pronounced by our blessed Lord. *If that evil Servant shall say in his Heart, the Lord delayeth his Coming, and shall begin to eat and drink with the drunken: The Lord of that Servant shall come in a Day, when he looketh not for him, and in an Hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his Portion with the Hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.* Would they escape his Misery and Punishment; let them diligently attend to the following Advice given by our Saviour to his Disciples after he had foretold the desolating Judgments, which were to come upon Jerusalem and the Jewish Nation. *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any Time your Hearts be over charged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and so that Day come upon you unawares: For as a Snare shall it come on all them*

DISCOURSE XIII. 273

them that are on the Face of the whole Earth. Watch therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these Things, that shall come to pass. But

3. Who can conceive the Measure of Guilt our Country is involved in, by Reason of the flagrant Manner, in which the Name, the *Word*, the *Sabbaths*, and *Ordinances* of God are profaned, despised, and vilified amongst us? Who can, without trembling for the Safety and welfare of his Country, seriously reflect on the little Reverence paid by many to that NAME, which is truly *reverend and holy*?

Whatever Lenity the supreme Majesty of the Universe may vouchsafe to shew toward some other Transgressors, yet he has peremptorily said, *that he will not hold him guiltless, who taketh his NAME in vain.* A most tremendous Declaration, and sufficient, it might be thought, to strike an Awe into the most heedless and unfeeling Mind; yet what Multitudes utterly disregard it! How exceedingly numerous are *vain and profane Swearers*, and what an

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274 DISCOURSE XIII.

immense Weight of Guilt our Nation lies under through their Means only?

But further; is not wilful and deliberate *Perjury* too common a Sin in this corrupt and degenerate Age? not to mention its Prevalence, be it more or less, in Courts of Judicature, whereby Life and Property have been sworn away; nor the numerous *inefficacious Oaths of Office*: Does not this most enormous Evil, *once in seven years*, break out like a devouring Pestilence, and visit all the Provinces of the Kingdom? Is it not dreadful to think what Influence this most heinous of Sins has in the Choice of Persons to represent us in *Parliament*, and to be Members of that *August Assembly*, which has been so long and so justly regarded as the *grand Bulwark of our Liberties*, and common Privileges, and *a chief Glory* of our most excellent Constitution? Surely it is of the Lord's Mercy, and because his Forbearance is marvellously great, that our Land is not consumed.

But will not the Lord visit for these Things? Seeing that such Numbers, once in seven Years, publicly, wilfully and deliberately

DISCOURSE XIII. 275

liberately renounce all Help from God; is there not Reason to apprehend Danger? Would it be very extravagant to suppose, that this spreading Evil, like a *Gangrene*, will sooner or latter eat up the very Vitals of our Constitution; and make that, which has been for so many Ages, the *Palladium of Britain*, the *principal Means* of its Ruin? What have we to trust to, if the Help of God is renounced? who besides him can possibly defend us in an Hour of Danger?

Further, would it not afflict every *Christian Heart* to think, how the Word of God is contemned, and disregarded?

What Numbers are there of all Ranks, who publicly deny its being his Word, and are ready to trample it under Foot as a vile Imposture? And how many more who profess to believe its divine Authority, yet in their Deeds treat it with all imaginable Irreverence. Happy if such in Time considered how they *can escape*, if they neglect so great *Salvation*; which at the first was spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by them that heard him, God also bearing them *Witness*, both with *Signs and Wonders*, and

276 DISCOURSE XIII.

with divers Miracles and Gifts of the holy Ghost, according to his own Will?

Again, how prevalent is the open Profanation of the *Lord's Day*?

That Day which we are commanded to keep holy, to spend in the sacred Exercises of Religion and Piety, and in attending the more momentous Concerns of our Souls and a future Life, is devoted by many to Sloth and Idleness, frivolous and vain Amusements, and the most illicit Pleasures. *Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the Streets of Askelon.*

And as the divine Institution of a *Sabbath* is thus most irreverently treated; so the *Ordinances of Religion in general* are exceedingly abused and slighted amongst us.

Do this, says the great Founder of our Hopes, and the Author of our Salvation, in Remembrance of me. It is not much that he requires. Yet how many, that would be thought to have a real and sincere Regard for him, and highly to reverence his Authority, treat this most plain and easy command, as if, in Reality, it had never been given? On the other Hand

what

DISCOURSE XIII. 277

what Multitudes are there, who eat and drink at the Table of their Lord *unworthily*? And to the unspeakable Reproach of our Country are there not thousands, who, in Order to qualify themselves for *secular Offices*, and for the sake of procuring a precarious Livelihood, are *tempted*, for any Thing they know to the contrary, *to eat and drink Judgment to themselves*. O Lord how long shall this *Prostitution* of thy holy Ordinance remain the Triumph of Infidels, and the Scandal of Christians! But I shall now proceed to observe,

4. In the next and last Place, that the Guilt of our Land is greatly increased through the sad *Decension* of vital Piety and Virtue among *real Christians*.

Is it not too apparent that the *wise* as well as the foolish have *slumbered and slept*? What Coldness and Lukewarmnes seem to have seized on Christian Professors of every Denomination? *It is good*, says the Apostle Paul, *to be zealously affected always in a good Thing*; yet how few are thus zealous? A Jewish Zeal, a Zeal without Knowledge, and which consists in Wrath,

T 3 Bitternes,

278 DISCOURSE XIII.

Bitterness, Censoriousness and uncharitableness toward Fellow Christians of different Sentiments and Opinions, is too frequently to be met with. But this is a Zeal, which, perhaps of all Things, is the greatest Enemy to vital Godliness, and real Religion. True and genuine Christianity it tends to eat up like a *Canker*. To have a Zeal like this is no better than to have an evil Eye against a Christian Brother, because the Eye of the Lord is good towards him, encouraging him to assert his own Liberty and Independence, and *to judge of himself what is right*. This Zeal took its first Rise from Hell, and is *devilish*; and happy would it be for the Christian World, and the Interest of real Religion in general, if it were banished the Earth, and confined to those dreary Regions whence it originally sprung. Happy would it be, if in the Room of it, that Zeal only, which is according to Knowledge, a Zeal for good Works, a Zeal guided by Christian Prudence, and Charity did prevail.

But

DISCOURSE XIII. 279

But how few are there, in whom this Zeal acts in *full* Strength and Vigour? How few of the Lord's *professed* Servants do his Work with *all* their *Might*? Do as much of it as they possibly *can*, and in the very best Manner that they are *able*? Where is the Christian, who gives *all* Diligence to add to his Christian Faith every other Christian Grace and Virtue? Are there many, who are so *fervent* as they *ought* to be in serving the *Lord*? Are there many, who love their Christian Brethren *fervently*? Has not a *Laodicean* Spirit extended its baneful Influence, to a great Degree, over all the Christian Churches, both Ministers and People? How *negligently* is the Lord's Work performed by many of his own Servants? How few Ministers watch over the Souls of their Hearers, as it *becomes* those to do, *who must give an Account*? How few Christian People seem to work out their own Salvation with all *becoming* Solicitude and Vigour? How little pouring out of the Heart before God in *Prayer*? What little Desire have Christians in general to *the sincere Milk of*

280 DISCOURSE XIII.

*the Word, that they may grow thereby; grow more virtuous and more holy? When are any known to give the most earnest Heed to the Things, which they hear? Is it not become too common a Practice among Christian Professors, in this Age, to spend the Sabbath, the Day which God has set apart for the Purposes of public Worship and religious Improvement, in attending their *domestic* Concerns, or in some Manner or other *unsuitable* to the great and important Ends of its Institution? And if they make their Appearance before God in his House, how careless and indolent the Behavior of many of them? When the Lord speaks, do his Servants hear? No, either their Thoughts are in the Ends of the Earth, or a deep Sleep has fallen upon them. May the Lord renew a right Spirit within us, and quicken us in his Way. When engaged in the Worship and Service of God, may our Hearts, with holy Fire, burn within us!*

But further, the Neglect of religious Education among all Ranks and Orders of Men,

DISCOURSE XIII. 281

Men, is another Instance of great Luke-warmness, and a crying Evil.

It is lamentable to think how this Evil has spread itself among many Christians, who may be justly supposed, in the Judgment of Charity, to be *really* as well as *nominally* such. It is to be feared that the Number of those is great, who, like *Eli* of old, may possess some real Religion themselves, yet, with him, are exceedingly careless about the spiritual Concerns of their Children. Of how many may it be said, that their Children make themselves vile, and *they restrain them not*. If Parents restrain not their Children, who can, who is likely to restrain them? If the Children of *religious Parents* are not *religiously educated*; if the Hopes of the rising Generation are suffered to perish under their Hands; who will be found to stand up for God and Religion, or even for their Country, in the *succeeding Age*? An inspired Writer once said *I have no greater Joy than to bear that my Children walk in the Truth*. What is then become of the Zeal of Christian Parents in the present Age,
who

who are so unconcerned and indifferent about the religious Interest of their Offspring? If their Zeal is not dead, does it not seem ready to die? It would be well if such Parents seriously considered the Judgment of God on *Eli*, and his House; *And the LORD said to Samuel, behold, I will do a Thing in Israel, at which both the Ears of every one that beareth it shall tingle. In that Day, I will perform against Eli all Things, which I have spoken concerning his House; when I begin, I will also make an End. For I have told him, that I will judge his House for ever; for the Iniquity which he knoweth; because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

Let lukewarm Professors of every Station, attend and lay to Heart the Words of the Lord concerning the Church of *Laodicea*. *I know thy Works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot; so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot; I will throw thee out of my Mouth. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: Be zealous therefore and repent.*

Thus, as proposed, have I laid before you,

you, in Part, the Sin and Reproach of our Country. Are not our Iniquity and Shame apparently very great? To every Mind desirous of securing the Favour of God, and prolonging the Prosperity of his Country, a deep Humiliation, speedy Repentance, and a general Reformation must appear absolutely necessary. God grant that these may begin and effectually take Place *this Day*. May the *present Fast* be such as God shall approve and accept. May we have Cause to bless the Lord, as a God, who hath not turned away our Prayers, nor his Mercy from us. May our Reproach be entirely done away, that Iniquity may not be our Ruin. May that Righteousness, which tends to save and exalt a Nation sinking under the Weight of its Sins, every where prevail and abound.

How Righteousness exalteth a Nation is next to be considered.

1. It does this as it effectually promotes its *internal Happiness*.

Righteousness gives a Nation Health and Vigour, and diffuses, wherever it prevails,

284 DISCOURSE XIII.

vails, universal Joy and Gladness. The *Throne* is established by Righteousness; and where Righteousness is universally practised, every *Subject* is secure and happy, a Stranger both to Dangers and Fears. Righteousness is attended with Blessings inconceivably great and diffusive. But to attain a more adequate Idea of its Influence on the Prosperity of a whole Nation, let us take a brief Survey of its happy Effects on private Families, and smaller Communities.

Take a transient View of a *Family*, in which universal Righteousness has fixed its Residence. The Blessings of Peace and Love, Competency and Content are to be found in every Apartment. There is Diligence in Business inseparably joined to Fervency of Spirit in the Service of God. There you will find the *nearest* and most *important* Relation of Life, with all its attendant Joys, undisturbed by any of those ill Qualities, unamiable and wayward Dispositions, which are a Disgrace and Reproach to either Sex.

Where

DISCOURSE XIII. 285

Where Righteousness dwells, you will see Parents condescending, affectionate and tender hearted, *not provoking their Children to Wrath*, with Sourness and hard Usage, severe and unreasonable Injunctions, immoderate and unnecessary Corrections; but ruling them in Wisdom and Love, and making every Provision, in their Power, both for their present and future Welfare. There Children towards each other are peaceable and loving, and towards their Parents dutiful and grateful, walking in all reasonable Subjection and Humility, honouring and obeying, readily and cheerfully, both Father and Mother, *in all Things, in the Lord.*

In the Habitation of the righteous, Masters are kind, *forbearing Threatening*, “ or “ the Roughness of unnecessary Menaces.” giving to their Servants *that, which is just and equal.* There Servants *answer not again*, with Pertness and Rudeness, but are obedient and industrious, faithful and honest. What a charming Family this? And who would not wish to be a Sharer of its Felicity,

286 DISCOURSE XIII.

city, and that Righteousness and Virtue
had taken Possession of every House?

Further, Righteousness would present us with a Scene equally lovely in a more extensive View of it.

Suppose a whole *Town*, or *Parish*, were to practise universal Righteousness, the Pride and Oppression of the rich, and the Envy and Discontent of the poor would vanish together. All Idleness, Tatling and Backbiting; all Strife and Variance would immediately cease. The poor would be easily and plentifully provided for, as the rich would be *rich in good Works*, *willing to communicate*; and the poor would be comparatively *few*, even those only whom Providence itself had made such. In short, Peace and Plenty would in general crown every Board.

Family Religion would be regularly kept up in every House; the Bible would be daily read, the public Ordinances of God's House would be duly attended and properly regarded; becoming Honour would be paid to the Day of the Lord; none would be *doing their own Ways, or finding*

DISCOURSE XIII. 287

ing their own Pleasure, but all would cheerfully join in calling the Sabbath a Delight, and the holy of the Lord honourable.

Christians of all Denominations would, at least in Heart, be one; and with Respect to those Things, wherein they cannot be of the same Mind, they would without Hesitation or Difficulty agree to differ *peaceably*.

All throughout the Place, under the Influence of real unaffected Piety, and undissembled Charity, would be happy in the full and uninterrupted Enjoyment of every divine and social Pleasure.⁷

As Righteousness would thus exalt any lesser Community; it would equally exalt the whole Nation. If Righteousness prevailed universally, Peace and Happiness would flow *every where* like a mighty Stream. ¶

Then Britain would become, by far and beyond all Question, the most respectable of all Kingdoms. All Divisions, which tend to weaken it, would for ever cease. In a Word, this mighty Empire would be as one Man, perpetually increasing in Wealth,

288 DISCOURSE XIII.

Wealth, Power, and Strength, and in every Thing whatever, that would have a Tendency to make it great and happy. Let every Man therefore who loves his Country, and seeks its Good, love and practise Righteousness. But

2. As universal Righteousness would exceedingly exalt our Nation in Point of *internal* Happiness, so would it raise its Credit to the highest Pitch of Elevation in the Eyes of *Foreigners*.

When thus exalted how ambitious would other Nations be to form an Alliance with it, and to approve themselves worthy Objects of its powerful Friendship? What Confidence would All its Allies repose in it, and how ready would they be on every Occasion to yield it all possible Aid? If Righteousness were once to become its universal Glory, how high would it stand in the Regard of its Friends, and how formidable would it be rendered to all its Enemies? What Nation then would think of *encroaching* on any of its Territories with *Impunity*; or presume in any Measure to insult it and rouse its Vengeance?

geance? Then one Briton would chase a Thousand Enemies, and two put ten Thousand to Flight.

3. Did Righteousness universally prevail, how highly would our Nation be exalted in the Favour of the King of Kings, and the supreme Governor of all Nations?

That great and mighty Being, who does whatever he pleaseth, both in Earth and Heaven, *loveth Righteousness*; and never fails to shew himself strong in the behalf of all People, among whom it dwells and reigns. Did Righteousness prevail and abound, God himself would be our never failing Friend. And if God should be for us, who then would be able to hurt us?

Though our Enemies should actually invade us, and come in upon us like a Flood, *the Lord would lift up a Standard against them*. In his Strength we should do valiantly and speedily put to Flight the Armies of the Aliens. Having God on our Side, the Lord of Hosts for our Refuge and Strength, we should have no Cause to fear, though the Earth should be removed; and though the

290 DISCOURSE XIII.

Mountains should be cast into the midst of the Sea. Though the Waters thereof should roar and be troubled, though the Mountains shake with the Swelling thereof. Having God for a Friend what a glorious and blessed Prospect should we have, not only for the present, but also for all future Times? We might then hope for the largest Increase, and the longest Continuance of our common Prosperity. We might then, on the most solid Foundation, bid Defiance to all the Attempts of France and Rome, and a Popish bigotted Pretender, yea of all our Enemies both secret and open, foreign and domestic, to reduce us to Bondage and Slavery. Then we should have Nothing to fear either as Britons or as Protestants. But to proceed,

Another most powerful Motive to the Practice of universal Righteousness, is presented to our particular Attention, at this Time, by the signal Judgments of Heaven, which have lately fallen on some other Countries.

When the Judgments of the Lord are in the Earth, it is said by the Prophet, that the Inha-

DISCOURSE XIII. 291

Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness. To learn Rigteousness is a Duty of universal Obligation, and the most important Business of Life. A louder Call to this, cannot easily be imagined, than that given by the late most dreadful and extensive Earthquakes, which have visited so many Places in *Europe, Africa* and *America*, and which have in some Degree, been felt in several Parts of this Kingdom. *Is it not at the REBUKE of the LORD that the Earth trembleth, and that the Sea is removed out of its Place, and the Foundations of the Hills shake?* Every truly wise and thinking Mind will consider Famine, Pestilence, Earthquakes, and every other Calamity, as proceeding from the supreme Ruler, and infinitely wise Disposer of all Things, whether in a Manner more immediate, or through the Intervention of secondary Causes. *His Kingdom ruleth over all.* He superintends all Events and Occurrences, all Causes and all Effects. He is a great and a terrible God; and often he has been known, one way or another, on Account of their abounding Iniquities,

292 DISCOURSE XIII.

ties, to be terrible in his doing toward the Children of Men.

Lately he thought fit to display the Greatness of his Power, and the awful Glory of his Majesty by shaking terribly *the Earth*. And never perhaps since the Foundations of the Earth were laid, has it been shaken in a Manner more terrible. The Ruin and Misery attending the *late Earthquakes* in several Parts of the World, especially *Portugal* and the Empire of *Morocco*, are not to be described. In this latter Kingdom, particularly at *Sallee, Fez, Mequinez* and *Morocco*, the Desolation appears almost incredible, notwithstanding the Account is said to have been received from *undoubted Authority*.

But what seems more immediately to engage the Attention of the *Europeans*, and is more peculiarly interesting to the Inhabitants of *Britain*, is the Destruction of *Lisbon*, the Metropolis of *Portugal*, which in Point of Riches was inferior perhaps to no City in *Europe*. This great and opulent City is now, in a Manner, no more,

and

DISCOURSE XIII. 293

and was brought to Desolation, as it were, in a Moment.

How doth the City sit solitary, that was full of People? how is she become as a Widow? She that was great among the Nations, and Princess among the Provinces. How perishable all worldly Wealth and Grandeur? seeing the richest Monarch in Europe was brought, in one Hour, to declare that he was without Subjects, without a House, without Money, and without Bread.

Without inquiring into the particular Design of this most terrible Visitation, one obvious and certain End the great Ruler of the Universe had in View was, that all, who should hear of it, and we among others, should *learn Righteousness*. Instead of supposing, by Reason of the tremendous and desolating Judgments lately fallen upon the Inhabitants of *Portugal*, that they were greater Sinners than all other Men, or even greater than the Inhabitants of *Britain*, for, especially if we consider the vast Superiority of our Privileges, we may be as great, if not greater Sinners than they, let us rather conclude that, un-

294 DISCOURSE XIII.

less we repent and reform, *we shall all likewise perish.*

Surely this speaks to us all, to consider our Ways, and without Delay *to turn our Feet to the Testimonies of the Lord.* But

Finally, another very cogent Motive to speedy Repentance and a general Reformation arises from the present very *critical* Conjuncture of public Affairs, and the near Prospect we have of being engaged in War with powerful, perfidious and cruel Enemies.

It is certain the Measures pursued of late in Order to assert our Rights, and defeat their iniquitous Designs have exasperated them to the utmost, so that they want not the Will and Inclination to do us all conceivable Mischief. We have indeed the Satisfaction to think, that our Cause is *just and good*, if any Regard is to be paid to the most express and solemn Treaties; but the Justice and goodness of our Cause alone are not absolutely to be relied on, unless we approve ourselves to him, who is supreme over all, by yielding ourselves Servants to Righteousness. Having God

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DISCOURSE XIII. 295

on our side, and having on the Armour of Righteousness, we need not fear any Enemy that may rise up against us. In that Case no Weapon, no Engine of Destruction can be formed that shall prosper. O *Britain!* Return now unto thy God, in the Way of true Repentance and new Obedience, for with thy God is perfect Strength and Safety. May the Lord *sprinkle clean Water upon our Land*, that it may be *clean from all its Filthiness*, and all its Reproach. May he cause the Inhabitants of it, from the highest to the lowest, to walk in his Statutes, and to keep his Judgments, and do them; that we may be still owned by him for his People, and be secure under his all powerful Protection from the Fear of Evil. To conclude with a few Reflections.

i. When we consider the dreadful Judgments and desolating Calamities, which have befallen other Countries; and the Number and Heinousness of *our Sins*, what Cause have we to be thankful, that we perished not with those who perished?

Is it not owing to the great and distinguishing Mercy of Heaven, that *London*

296 DISCOURSE XIII.

fell not when *Lisbon* fell? Who can conceive the Distress the whole Nation would have been in, had such an Event happened? Is it not too probable, if we consider the Posture of our Affairs with Respect to a neighbouring Enemy, that *Britain* ere this would have been a Prey to those who hate it, and involved in one common Ruin? It is not *long* since that LONDON has been threatened, once and again, to be made as *Lisbon* now is, a ruinous Heap. The Cry of its Sins is undoubtedly great. May God grant Repentance to it, and to all who seek its good, and wish the *Continuance* of its Prosperity.

Finally, if Righteousness exalteth a Nation, is its chief Glory and best Defence; ought it not to be the earnest Endeavour of every one, who wisheth well to his Country, to promote and establish Righteousness every where in *Britain*?

Is it possible for any one, who has a due Sense of his inestimable Privileges as a Member of the *British* Community, and the Danger which at this Time threatens the whole Nation, not to do all that

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DISCOURSE XIII. 297

in him lies, to check the Progress of Vice, and to bring about a general Reformation? But here perhaps one or another will be ready to say, what can I do towards accomplishing so great and stupendous a Work? The Answer is obvious and easy. Let every one *reform himself*, and the mighty Work is immediately and effectually done. Then the Peace and Prosperity of *Britain* will be like a full, everflowing River, and its *Righteousness like the Waves of the Sea*. Then God will be unto us a *Wall of Fire round about, and the Glory in the midst of us.*

D I S.

DIE DOLMETSCHERIN

DISCOURSE XIV.

Being the Substance of two DIS-
COURSES delivered at Sarum,
February 17, 1758, the Day
appointed for a public and ge-
neral *Fast*.



PSALM XX. 7.

*Some trust in Chariots, and some in Horses ;
but we will remember the Name of the
LORD our God.*

THE Purposes, for which we are assembled this Day, are peculiarly interesting and important. We have been called upon by our KING, the common Father of his People, to *bumble* ourselves before the most high and mighty God ; to lament the manifold Iniquities of a corrupt and

300 DISCOURSE XIV.

and degenerate Age; to *deprecate* those awful Judgments and direful Calamities, which threaten us, and which our great and numerous Provocations have most justly deserved; to *implore* the Mercy and Protection of Heaven, and the Assistance of the Almighty, amidst the various Dangers of a *necessary*, but hitherto *unsuccessful* War; to *unite* in presenting the *most fervent* and *earnest Supplications* before the divine Footstool for a Blessing upon our Counsels, our Fleets and Armies, our Friends and Allies; and, after a Series of Mortifications and Disappointments, and many painful and alarming Apprehensions, to *pray* to him, who is the supreme Disposer of all Events, that such a Measure of Success may attend our *future* Designs and Enterprizes as shall happily terminate in the Restoration of our Peace, the Safety and growing Prosperity of *Britain* with all its Plantations and Colonies; the effectual Preservation and firm Establishment of all that is dear and valuable to us as Men and as Christians; that the Interest of *Protestantism* in general, and the Liberties

DISCOURSE XIV. 301

ties of our Country in particular may be supported and defended, and all the Schemes concerted by Oppression and Tyranny, whether ecclesiastical or civil may be every where totally defeated. These are the great and momentous Purposes for which we and the whole Nation are this Day assembled before God.

We love our Country, and have *trembled* for its Fate. With heart felt Pain have we beheld its Glory sinking. Its numerous Misfortunes and Disappointments, its repeated Miscarriages and Losses have been the Sources of *real*, though hitherto *unavailing* Sorrow. We have seen all its various Measures disconcerted; its greatest Efforts prove vain and ineffectual, and its most sanguine Expectations and Hopes vanish. We know by happy Experience the matchless Excellency of its Constitution, have long felt the Equity and Mildness of its Government, and have hitherto rejoiced, under its safe Protection, and with *it* all our Felicity stands or falls. Interest as well as Duty, every Consideration capable of moving a generous and grateful

302 DISCOURSE XIV.

grateful Mind claim our utmost solicitude for its Welfare. It needs the strongest Aid, and loudly calls for Help. God grant it may direct its Eyes to those *Hills whence Salvation cometh.*

Happy for us if Misfortunes and ill Success have, at length, taught us the utter Vanity of self Confidence and self Dependence, and all Reliance on an Arm of Flesh. Long and in vain have we boasted of the Valour of our Troops, the Number and Strength of our Ships. Our ill Success has been little inferior to our Presumption and Vanity. Had we been as successful as we have been presumptuous and sanguine, we must *soon* have driven our Enemies out of all their Encroachments, and even their original Settlements on the *Continent of America*; and have totally ruined their Trade and Shipping in every Part of the World. But so contrary has the Event been to our Expectations, that three Campaigns, since the Commencement of Hostilities in *America*, are now elapsed, and yet the Object of our Wishes is, in Appearance, more distant

tant than ever. The general disregard to Providence, and the little Sense we had of the Importance and Necessity of superior Direction and Assistance at the Breaking out of the War, must have been perceived by all. May this most fatal Evil and all the other Causes of our Misfortunes and Disgraces be far removed from all our Coasts. *Henceforth let us set up our Banners in the NAME of the LORD. Some trust in Chariots, and some in Horses; some in Fleets, and some in Armies; but we will remember the Name of the LORD our God.*

Every Man, who loves his Country, and seriously reflects on its *past* Misfortunes, and its present *critical* Circumstances, cannot but heartily wish that some Remedy were *speedily* applied, that should prove in all Respects equal to our Danger; and that such Measures were immediately taken, in the further Prosecution of the War, as would infallibly ensure the so much *needed*, and so much *desired* Success. Without intermeddling with Politics, and in perfect Consistence with my Profession and Character as a Christian

304 DISCOURSE XIV.

Christian Minister, I shall boldly recommend the Resolution formed by the Church of God in the Text, as a Remedy in all Respects equal to the most alarming Symptoms, and every Way answerable to the most sanguine Expectations; which is, *to remember the Name of the LORD*; to remember God, so as to secure an Interest in his Favour and Friendship, and so as to place a steady Dependence, in all our *future* Undertakings, on his Concurrence and Blessing.

We have fought and warred, but the happy End proposed is in no Degree obtained; and one chief Reason of our Disappointment undoubtedly is, that we never *asked Success of God*; or which is little better, we asked, and received not, because we *asked amiss*. A Variety of Reasons have been assigned for our Defeats and Miscarriages, and innumerable Conjectures formed, and many of them without Question, as weak as they were wicked. Whereas the principal Cause of all seems in general to have been overlooked; I mean that Disregard to Providence, and a divine

Superinten-

DISCOURSE XIV. 305

Superintendency, which is thought by some to have become one of our *national Characteristics*. So great is the Prevalence of *Irreligion*, of one Kind and another, that it is supposed by many to have, in a manner, extinguished all *religious Hypocrisy*. *Modern Hypocrisy*, according to the common Opinion, is quite of another Sort, and subsists among those who dread to appear so pious and virtuous as they *really* are. A striking Proof how low the Credit of true Religion is sunk; and how much the great and infinitely adorable Object of it is disregarded, and what little Deference is paid to his over-ruling Providence, and universal Government.

Of this fatal Inattention Numbers are guilty from Principles openly avowed and professed. An utter Disbelief of a *particular Providence*, of the Efficacy of Prayer, and all Applications to God for help and Assistance, constitutes one great and distinguishing Part of what they call Religion, a Religion from which the wicked and bad alone can derive Consolation, and which tends to make the virtuous and good,

306 DISCOURSE XIV.

in a Variety of Circumstances, of all Men
the most miserable.

But besides those who openly reject the very *Notion* of a particular Interposition of the Deity in human Affairs, a greater Number still by their *Works* deny it, exercising no Dependence upon it, and having no Regard to the Concurrence of Heaven in any of their Undertakings.

The general Inattention to Providence at the Commencement of Hostilities we all remember. Would not any Person *then*, and for a considerable While *after*, have appeared exceedingly singular, if not truly impertinent, that would have dared, in any Company, to make the most distant Reference to it. On the contrary, what did we not hear from one and all of our own Power and Might, our naval Force, our wooden Castles, and the British Thunder, which were to carry Terror and Ruin far and near? How did we glory and triumph in our having obtained at last a *Sea War*? Were not the Lords of the Ocean to engage their Enemies on their own proper Element? Were we not to exert

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DISCOURSE XIV. 307

our *natural* Strength, and to have the Satisfaction of fighting only our *own Battles*? Was not the *whole* Attention of Britain to be directed to its *formidable* Navy; and were not the Fleets of our Enemies to be either all taken, sunk or blown up? Was not *French* Insolence at length to feel the whole Weight of *British* Vengeance, that surrounding Nations might never dream any more of rousing with Impunity the *British* Lion? Did not some proceed so far, in open Defiance of Providence, as to lay Wagers upon our Successes? In a Word, did we not discover almost every Mark appertaining to a People, that had engaged in War, and were determined to prosecute it with an entire Confidence in their own Strength, and without any Regard to his Concurrence, who alone can *command* Success?

Happy is it, if our great and unexpected Mortifications and Disappointments have at length effectually convinced us of our Guilt and Folly, and brought us back to that Sobriety of Thought, which was once a Characteristic of our Nation in its

Days of Glory, and which highly becomes a rational People in all Seasons, and more especially in a Season of War and general Danger. In the Room of Presumption and vain Security may a rational religious Confidence, unassuming Courage, and manly Fortitude speedily succeed. O *Britain* where is thy God? Remember now the NAME of the LORD. Seek his Favour and Friendship, and put thy Trust and Confidence in him alone. And as a Motive to this,

1. Let us remember that he is *able* to give us all the Assistance, that we can possibly Want, or desire.

That God has not as yet gone forth with our Hosts is manifest to every Eye, and that we want some very *powerful* Help is equally clear. To God belongeth Power, Power irresistible and unlimitted. *He is the Lord strong and mighty. In the Greatness of his Excellency he overthroweth those, who rise up against him; when he sendeth forth his Wrath, they are consumed as Stubble. The Lord is a Man of War, the God of Armies, the supreme Commander of*

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DISCOURSE XIV. 309

all the Forces of the Universe, *The Lord of Hosts is his Name.* His Name is a Stronghold, an impregnable Tower of Defence in the greatest Dangers. Never did any People perish, whom he vouchsafed to own. The Cause which he espouses, he is able to maintain. He is *able* to do abundantly more than we can ask or desire. Therefore in this Season of Danger let *Britain* seek the Lord. He *can* either destroy or save. Never was the Situation of any People *desperate*, if God was *with them*. Thou shalt not be *affrighted*, said *Moses* to the *Israelites*, *for the Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God.* *They shall fight against thee*, said the Lord to the Prophet *Jere-miah*, *but they shall not prevail, for I am with thee.* Happy *Britain*, if once befriended by the Greatness of his Power. All the Nations of the Earth, the greatest and most formidable Powers before him are as nothing, O that our Nation, struck with a deep and awful Sense of his glorious Majesty and matchless Strength, would *buckle itself under his mighty Hand.* His Power is abundantly sufficient to exalt it.

310 DISCOURSE XIV.

A firm Alliance formed with the *Almighty*, though destitute of all human Aid, would soon turn the Balance in our Favour. The Balance of Power is ever in his Hands to turn it whithersoever he pleaseth. The Fate of every Kingdom and Nation is ever subject to his Pleasure. *His Kingdom ruleth over all; the Lord is high above all Nations.* No Kingdom or Nation is able to stand before him, when his Wrath is kindled but a little. He can lay the Pride of the mightiest States level with the Dust, and make of the smallest People the greatest Nation. His own Right Hand can work Salvation, when all human Helps have failed, and when to every human Eye nothing appears but inevitable Ruin. There is no Restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.

This all Europe *saw* when God made bare his Arm on the memorable Fields of *Rosbach*, and saved the *Prussian* Monarch. On all sides surrounded by the Waves of Death and Desolation, when Friends as well as Foes had pronounced his Ruin *certain*, then he felt the mighty aid of Heaven,

DISCOURSE XIV. 311

ven, and still with grateful Admiration owns it. Now may the matchless Hero sing, *the Lord is my Rock, my Fortress and Deliverer.* *The Sorrows of Death compassed me about, and the Floods of ungodly and unrighteous Men.* *The Snares of Death prevented me, in my Distress I called upon the Lord,* and cried unto my God. He heard my Voice, my Cry came up before him, even into his Ears. Then the Earth shook and trembled, the Foundations of the Hills moved, and were shaken, because he was wroth. He bowed the Heavens also and came down, and Darkness was under his Feet. There went up a Smoke out of his Nostrils, and Fire out of his Mouth devoured. He sent out his Arrows, and scattered them. He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many Waters. He delivered me from my strong Enemy, and from those, who hated me; for they were too strong for me. They prevented me, in the Day of my Calamity, but the Lord was my Stay; he brought me forth also into a large Place. O Lord thou hast enlarged my Steps under me, thou makest my Feet like Hinds Feet. I have pursued my

312 DISCOURSE XIV.

Enemies, and overtaken them; neither did I turn again till they were consumed. Thou hast taught my Hands to War, and girded me with Strength unto Battle; thou hast subdued under me those, who rose up against me. In Consequence of this most signal Deliverance wrought for the illustrious Sovereign of Prussia, let the Inhabitants of Britain remember the Rock of their Salvation. Let them be no longer presumptuously vain of their Chariots and Horses, their Fleets and Armies, but let them remember the Name of the Lord their God.

We have abundant Reason to remember him. His Power hath frequently appeared singularly glorious in the Salvation of Britain. We have had repeated Cause to sing; if it had not been the Lord, who was on our Side; if it had not been the Lord who was on our Side, when Men rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick, when their Wrath was kindled against us; then the proud Waters had overwhelmed us, the Stream had gone over our Soul. Our Fathers trusted in him, and they were saved.

DISCOURSE XIV. 313

saved. God forbid that we their Children should be so foolish and ungrateful as to forget him. He, who hath so often wrought Deliverance when Britain called, can still deliver. His Arm is not now shortened that he cannot save. The everlasting God fainteth not, neither is he weary; his Strength is never exhausted. Therefore in the Name of the LORD our God, the God of Heaven and Earth, the God of our Fathers, let our Help and Confidence be placed.

2. And to encourage us further to seek his Favour and Friendship, and to fix our humble and steady Dependence upon him; let us not only remember his Power, but also his Mercy.

He is the most merciful, as well as the most mighty Being. *He is a God full of Compassion and gracious, slow to Anger, long suffering, and plenteous in Mercy. The Lord is good; his Mercy is everlasting.* And it is manifestly of his Mercy that we have not been consumed. We are without Dispute a very sinful People, a Nation very heavily laden with Iniquity. Yet such

such is the Mercy and Forbearance of God, that he has been pleased *hitherto* to spare us. In the midst of *Judgments* he hath remembered Mercy. Through every Stage of the *present War*, which has been so *peculiarly* mortifying and unfortunate, his Conduct has plainly declared, that he was not *willing* either to *destroy* or *forsake* us.

It has indeed pleased him so to order Events, that our *ill Success* should form the most striking Contrast to our *Pride*. Never did a People, at setting out, more vainly boast of what they should perform, yet in the Course of several Years nothing has been done. We had conceived an unmeasurable Degree of Vanity, and, as might have been most reasonably expected, we brought forth *Wind*. Never did *Britain* make so pitiful, so *contemptible* a Figure. Not that I apprehend our Losses to have been in Reality, either very great or very many; but the Disgrace attending them has been *unlimited* and *unexampled*. However considerable the Loss of *Minorca* may be supposed in itself, yet doubtless what

DISCOURSE XIV. 315

what principally chagrined us, and most sensibly hurt us, was the *shameful Manner* in which it was lost. We have been thought, rather than relieve distressed Fidelity and Bravery, and acquire Glory, to stand in Awe of a *vanquished* Enemy, and under the Influence of *imaginary Terrors* to *run away* from Victory. And such in Consequence was the Blow given to our national Pride, that it had nigh plunged us into universal Anarchy and Confusion; and this probably it would effectually *have done*, had not the *Mercy* of our God stood our *Friend*.

Again, most severely was our Pride attacked by the *Method* made use of to divert the Danger we were in from a *French Invasion*; a Danger, whether real or imaginary, that had exceedingly alarmed the *whole Nation*. As Salvation could be obtained from no *other Quarter*, it must be sought from *Hanover*. The Application for *such Aid* was a most bitter Pill to a true *old England Constitution*. However we were obliged to acquiesce; nor did we *openly murmur* till our Dangers and Fears were

316 DISCOURSE XIV.

were over. Then indeed our Pride broke forth in all its pristine Vigour, first in *rude Attacks* on the high *Authority*, which so kindly apprized us of our perilous Situation; then in the most ungenerous, inkos-pitable Attempt to *starve* the friendly Instruments of our Deliverance. And when returned to the Defence of their *own Country*, which their *Connections* with us, and *Service* done us had exposed to the high Resentment of our Enemies, *British* Pride still pursued them, and, because they had presumed to yield their Aid to mighty *Britain*, was ready to exult in all their subsequent Calamities. A most surprising Instance of Ingratitude and Cruelty, which in common Life would create general Detestation. However the *Mercy* of God was great throughout the whole. It laboured hard to remove our Pride, while we ourselves, for a Time at least, were preserved,

And not unsimilar to this has the Conduct of divine Mercy appeared towards us, in the late most signal Successes and glorious Victories of his *Prussian* Majesty. It *bumbled* us *greatly*, set our *own* Insufficiency,

DISCOURSE XIV. 317

ency, and the utter Vanity of all *self* Dependence in a glaring Light, when shewing itself *strong* in our behalf, and in a very effectual Manner preventing those numerous Evils, which *otherwise* might have risen from our own *previous* Miscarriages, from *falling* upon us. Providence though it would not give *us* the Honour of helping ourselves, yet enabled another Hand to do it; a Hand which all the World, and especially we ourselves thought to have been altogether *helpless*. In what particular Manner *secondary* and more *immediate* causes may have operated, it may not so well become me to judge, nor is it so material to determine; but with the Conduct of divine Providence in Relation to us, we are all most *nearly* concerned. The Mercy of Providence towards us has been exceedingly manifest from first to last; and perhaps most *conspicuous* of all where, from *partial* Views of Things, the Conduct of the Deity may have appeared most *unfriendly* and *severe*, even in our *Disgraces* and *ill Successes*.

That

318 DISCOURSE XIV.

That we have done *nothing* ourselves is readily allowed by all; nor does any Man of Thought expect we ever *shall do* any Thing to the *Purpose*, unless we can engage the Almighty on our Side. He has *biterto* in the Greatness of his Mercy suspended our Doom. He has given us Time and Space to repent. He has indeed, in a Manner unexampled, confounded our Presumption and self Confidence, but yet without destroying us. God grant that the several Means, he has used to *bumble* us, may prove *effectual*. *Before Honour is Humility*. If our repeated Miscarriages and Disappointments have at length taught us *Humility*, what we deemed our *Loss* has eventually proved our greatest *Gain*.

As far as we are capable of judging from the general Course of Providence, we may humbly hope that God has not utterly *renounced* us; nay that he *waits* to be *gracious*. May we no longer despise the Riches of his Goodness, Forbearance and Long-suffering, | not knowing that the End and Design is to lead us to Repentance. These *three Years* we have been spared in Spite of all the Efforts of our Enemies.

DISCOURSE XIV. 319

Enemies. A fourth now commences; and what the Sentence is, which is gone forth concerning us, unless there appear a speedy Reformation and Amendment, we know not. Perhaps God hath said *I will go and return to my Place till they acknowledge their Offences, and seek my Face.* Perhaps, if we continue to disregard the Lord and his Ways, and out of the Fullness of our Pride and Self-sufficiency go on to contemn his Providence, the Decree may have past to cut us down.

Another Campaign approaches, what the End will be is to us unknown. Secret Things belong to God, who doth whatsoever seemeth good unto himself both in Earth and Heaven. This we know, for he hath again and again declared it, that he resisteth the proud, and sheweth favour only to the humble. All Nations are in his Hands, as the Clay in the Hands of the Potter; and thus hath he declared, *at what Instant I speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it Do evil in my Sight, that it obey not my Voice; then I will repent of the Good, wherewith I said*

320 DISCOURSE XIV.

said I would benefit them. And at what Instant I shall speak concerning a Nation and concerning a Kingdom to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that Nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them. May all Ranks of Men amongst us return now every one from his evil Way, and make their Ways and their Doings good. For thus saith the LORD, *repent, and turn yourselves from all your Transgressions, so Iniquity shall not be your Ruin.* Let us one and all humble ourselves under the mighty Hand of God, that in due Time he may exalt us. Now is the accepted Time, let us now remember the NAME of the LORD. *Let us seek him while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.* On the greatness of his Power, and the Riches of his Mercy let Britain place its whole Dependence.

3. To excite us further to seek the Favour and Friendship of God, and to place our Confidence in the Aid of his Providence, let us consider that no other Power

but

DISCOURSE XIV. 321

but that of God alone can possibly help us.

Should God be against us, all human Strength would be utterly vain. The whole Universe would not be able to save us. *The Battle is not to the Strong. There is no King saved by the Multitude of an Host; a mighty Man is not delivered by much Strength.* Without the Concurrence of the Almighty, the wisest Precautions, the best concerted Schemes, the most vigorous Efforts will avail Nothing. There is no Wisdom, nor Counsel, nor Strength against the Lord. The strongest Alliances, the greatest Armies, the most numerous Fleets, are incapable of commanding either Success or Safety. *The Horse is prepared against the Day of Battle, but Safety is of the Lord.* Historians ancient and modern present us with innumerable Attestations to the Truth of this.

Where God thinks fit to withhold Success, not the greatest Superiority either of Strength or Numbers will ever give it. This has been particularly evident in the Course of the *present* War. The grand

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Theatre of it has been such as gave us an Opportunity to cope with our Enemies, not only with stronger Fleets, but also with more numerous Armies; yet their Measures have been successful, and ours defeated, both by Sea and Land. Victory has attended *them* both in *Europe* and *America*; but in no Part of the World have we been able to succeed. To inquire into the more *immediate* Causes of all this would be neither useful, nor perhaps becoming. But it nearly concerns us to know, as well as most seriously to consider, that the *great* and *chief* Cause was the Displeasure of Providence. It is unquestionable, if Providence had been on our Side, that we should have been every where as successful, as we have been unfortunate. And unless Providence be at last prevailed upon to interpose in our Favour, we cannot *rationally* expect to prosper in any *future* Undertaking; but on the contrary proceed by hasty Steps from deep *Contempt* to total *Ruin*.

And as it is determined to put our Affairs to the Issue of another Campaign, it concerns

DISCOURSE XIV. 323

concerns us *first* and *above* all Things to secure the Favour of Heaven. Let our Resources for War be ever so great, let our Armaments be ever so mighty and formidable, it is God alone can *save* us. *Who will bring us into the strong City?* Who will lead us to victory and Triumph? *Wilt not thou O God!* who hast not been pleased to go out, as yet, either with our Fleets or Armies. Give us Help from Trouble, for vain is the Help of Man. Through God we shall do valiantly, *for he it is that shall tread down our Enemies.* In vain is Salvation hoped for from human Skill and Force; truly *in the Lord* is the Salvation of *Britain*. O that the Salvation of *Britain* were come, and every Danger, that threatens it, totally removed.

4. To excite us further to seek the Favour of God, and to place our Confidence in his Providence, let us consider that on his gracious and effectual Interposition alone depend the *Preservation* and *Continuance* of all our inestimable Privileges.

Our Constitution is the Admiration and Envy of all surrounding Nations, being

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324 DISCOURSE XIV.

an equal Mixture of Liberty and regal Authority; of all Governments the *very best*. This admirable, unrivalled Constitution is now in the most *imminent Danger*. Its very Foundations are levelled at; and every Felicity we possess as *Britons*, unless prevented by the friendly Aid and Care of Heaven, must fall a Prey to those who *cruelly hate us*. If God preserve us not, the *inveterate* and *unwearied* Enemy of our Rest and Peace must triumph over us, and *British Freedom be no more*. Long have we tasted the various Sweets of Liberty, the highest Joy of Life, the noblest Privilege of Humanity. In *Britain* Liberty wants no Eulogium; every Tongue sounds forth its Praise. It is the high Prerogative of all; the special Privilege of our Birth.

Freeborn Britons your Liberties are in Danger. I have no Design to preach Sedition, yet I say, *your Liberties are in Danger*: And if God defends them not, and crowns our *future* Measures with Success, they will soon be for ever lost.

Our King, our Country call for Aid. My Friends, *unquestioned* is your Loyalty and

DISCOURSE XIV. 325

and Zeal; your KING you love and honour. *May the Name of the God of Jacob defend him, may the Lord fulfil all his Petitions, and grant unto him according to his own Heart.* My Countrymen, you love your Country; you seek its Good, and ardently wish to see it prosper. *Britain you prefer above your chief Joy:* Your Hearts, your Fortunes, your all are at its Service; more than Death itself would its Ruin pain you; upon its *Preservation* and Prosperity all your temporal Joys are built. If so, make haste and delay not to seek your God.

Dangers threaten on every Side. From God alone Salvation cometh. If God *himself* does not go forth with our Hosts, *Britain* must most surely fall. If God *himself* will not plead our Cause, and send his *Blessing* with our Arms, our Enemies must at length *prevail*. And if so farewell, a long farewell to every *British Joy*. If in this present perilous Juncture you would not forget your Country, devoutly remember the Name of the Lord. “ May this “ Season of common Danger drive us to “ our God, against whom we have so

326 DISCOURSE XIV.

“ long and so generally rebelled; may
“ we henceforward keep an humble and
“ constant Eye to the Government and
“ Disposal of Heaven, amidst the most
“ vigorous Endeavours and unremitting
“ Exertion of our Powers for our De-
“ fence and Safety; and never more dream
“ of Victory, but as the Vouchsafement
“ of Providence, lest it should *again* write
“ its own Honours, and our terrible Hu-
“ miliation with the Swords of our Ene-
“ mies; may the God of all Power be the
“ Strength of our Arm; may we in every
“ Respect walk worthy of our Liberties
“ and our holy Religion, lest, these inef-
“ timable Talents being slighted and
“ abused, God should take them away
“ from an ungrateful and unprofitable
“ People, and avenge the enormous Guilt
“ by letting in upon us a Deluge of *Popish*
“ Superstition, Tyranny and Ruin.” And
this leads me,

5. As a further Motive to seek divine Favour and Protection, to take a transient Survey of the numerous and complicated Evils, we must rationally expect to follow
in Case

DISCOURSE XIV. 327

in Case our Enemies succeed, which they most certainly will, if God defends us not.

Heaven forbid! that *France* should ever triumph over *Britain*. That would be Darkness indeed, Darkness far more thick and gloomy than all the Shadows of Death; a Day of Desolation that would overwhelm our Souls. No Mind can *image* to itself the Calamities, which would lay waste our Country, should *French* Designs be fully executed. We have to do with Enemies, who certainly hate us with the most cruel, inveterate hatred. They hate *us* above all People. We have *heard* indeed of the Horrors and Devastations of War, but never *felt* them. But should the Enemy prosper in the destructive Schemes he has formed against us, we should soon *experience* all the Misery that can possibly attend it.

What in the first Place would not our Plantations and Colonies feel? What Miseries have not many of their back Settlements already *felt*? Who can *read* without Horror, the authentic Accounts given of the unnatural, unparalleled Barbarities, which have been perpetrated by *Indian* Sa-

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vages, in Alliance with, and instigated by *French* Perfidy and Cruelty? What Multitudes of Families have been driven from their Habitations, and robbed of their all?
“ What Numbers of others, in the silent
“ Hours of Night, have they surprised
“ in their Beds, beheading or scalping
“ them, mangling their Bodies, ripping
“ up the Women, and even drinking
“ their Blood, imbibing a more outrage-
“ ous Fury with the inhuman Draught.”
Dreadful Specimens of what the other Inhabitants would soon experience, if Gallic Schemes should prove successful.

But to come nearer Home. Should the Enemy invade our *own* Country, and our *own* Land become the Seat of Hostilities, who would be able to paint our manifold Distresses? What should we think of our Circumstances were they only equal to those of *Hanover*? How would *Britons* bear to have their Habitations, their Properties, their Persons, their Wives, and their Daughters lie exposed to the Insolence and brutish Rapacity of a *French* Soldiery? Such an Event to us who have
lived

DISCOURSE XIV. 329

lived at the loftiest Heights of Ease and Luxury, and in all the Greatness of *British* Pride, would be like sinking down to Hell. But infinitely more deplorable than *this*, if possible, would our Case be, was Providence once to suffer the prosperous Arms of our Enemies to take *Possession* of our Land. When once subdued and fallen, can any Mind conceive the Anguish of every *British* Heart? What a Contrast would this form to *French* Vanity so highly gratified, and so outrageously exulting? What would then become of our Souls and our Consciences, and of every Thing capable of rendering Life itself of any Moment? Liberty either civil or religious must no more be *named*. We should then become a *Province* to *France*, and the Servants of *Slaves*.

Not to mention the Liberty of the *Press*, or *manly* Freedom of *Speech*, what would then become of Freedom of Thought, of Reason, and Religion? What Treatment we might look for in a *religious* Capacity may be learned, in *Part*, from the Severities used by the *French* Government to-

330 DISCOURSE XIV.

wards its own Subjects if *Protestants*, be they ever so well affected and loyal to their Sovereign. “ Upwards of seventy Years have they been in a State of violent Persecution. The Substance of the several Edicts in Force against them, and which have been as furiously executed, as they are in themselves severe, is to this Effect. It is made Death to the Ministers, who officiate at their Meetings, perpetual Imprisonment to the Women, who are present, and the Men are to be sent to the Gallies, and chained to the Oars for Life. How the cruel Orders issued out against them have been executed, the Attack of their religious Assemblies by Soldiers, who scrupled not to fire among them, the Condemnation of some, who were apprehended, to the Prison, and of others to the Gallies, and the Murders of Ministers from 1745 to 1750, dreadfully testify. In the Year 1750 the French King published an Ordinance to enforce all former Orders against his Protestant Subjects, and to injoin the Officers

DISCOURSE XIV. 331

“ Officers and Judges to attend diligently
“ to their Execution. In Consequence of
“ this new Edict, the Troops, so late as
“ 1754, particularly in *Languedoc*, made
“ diligent Search not only for the Pastors,
“ who were mostly fled to Woods and
“ Dens, but for their defenceless Flocks;
“ of which a great many have been taken
“ and confined to Prisons. One Assembly
“ in particular having broken up, were
“ attacked by a Party of Dragoons, who
“ fired among them, wounded one Man,
“ and ended his Life with their Bayonets.
“ Forty-five were taken Prisoners. Ac-
“ cording to other Accounts, five or six
“ were killed upon the Spot, and four-
“ teen or fifteen wounded.” How bar-
barous, how shocking would a Treatment
like this appear now in *Britain*, and how
deplorable the Situation of *three Millions*
of Souls where it prevails? “ I have con-
“ versed, said a certain English Minister
“ lately deceased, with those, who saw
“ their Assemblies dissolved, their Tem-
“ ples ruined, and even their dead Bodies

“ torn

332 DISCOURSE XIV.

“ torn out of their Graves, and given to
“ the Fowls of the Air.

“ And so late as September, 1755, the
“ worthy Gentlemen, in *London*, formed
“ into a Society for the Relief of such as
“ flee for Refuge to this Kingdom, give
“ this Account. Our Protestant Bre-
“ thren in *France* continue to groan un-
“ der the most heavy Oppression. Their
“ religious Assemblies being forcibly stop-
“ ped every where, their Pastors pursued
“ with the utmost Rigour, silenced, and
“ obliged to fly the ignominious Death
“ they are threatened with, and which
“ some of them have already suffered,
“ their Flocks left open to the violent
“ Persecutions of a powerful and furious
“ Clergy; and a great Number striving
“ daily to make their Escape into this
“ Kingdom, to partake of our inestima-
“ ble Liberties.” How miserable and
worthy of Compassion their Case, espe-
cially when from good Authority assured
that these Sufferers are so far from being
mutinous and rebellious, that they have
given the most evident Proofs of their Loy-
alty

DISCOURSE XIV. 333

alty to their Prince, in their public Discourses, and also by their peaceable Behaviour, in Seasons when they had a fair Opportunity of revenging themselves; Circumstances which shew that their Religion is the only Source of their Grievous Oppressions. Their Sufferings are indeed great, but are nothing to what we should feel were French Ambition and Cruelty once to subdue the British Nation.

Having thus suggested what we might expect in Relation to Religion; it is of less Consequence to intimate what Kind of Treatment we might reasonably look for in a civil Capacity. Suffice it now to say, that we should experience every conceivable Misery capable of arising from the most abject Subjection and Slavery under a Nation that is *itself enslaved*. That we may never *experimentally* know what appears, on the faintest Representation, so exceedingly shocking to our Imaginations, let us without Delay seek the Aid of Heaven. It is God alone can save us. Under his Protection and Favour may we still remain a *free and happy People*. Strenuously

334 DISCOURSE XIV.

eously to defend our invaluable Liberties and Privileges ought certainly to be the steady Resolution of every *British* Soul, but let this most laudable and truly noble Resolution be made in humble and absolute Dependence on the Strength of him, who is Almighty. On his Concurrence all Success depends.

6. As a further Encouragement to seek his Favour, and to place our Confidence in Almighty Aids, let us briefly consider the Justice and Goodness of our Cause.

Had not our Cause been *good*, we could not have had any Reason to hope, that God *would* help us; for with God there is no *Unrighteousness*. Such were the Motives, which gave Rise to the present War, on our Part, that probably nothing, but our Sins and a Neglect of Providence, can render it in the *End* unsuccessful. The just Foundation upon which it stands, must be seen by all unprejudiced Judges. The following Extracts from a Sermon preached, in the Year 1755, by the President of the College of New Jersey, may not be foreign to our present Purpose. It

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DISCOURSE XIV. 335

is manifest, says he, beyond Dispute, that the *French* King has, for these many Years, been laying Schemes to enlarge his Dominions in *America*, and to distress us. Though, by the Treaty of *Aix-la-Chapelle*, all Things were to remain on the same Footing as before the War; yet, no sooner was the Treaty ratified than he begins to send Colonies to *neutral* Islands; projects a Settlement in *Nova Scotia*; raises a Dispute about the *Limits*; embroils the Affairs of our *Indians*, and labours to draw them off from our Alliance. Then he adds, enough has been said in the public Prints to render it indisputable that the Settlements made by the *French* on the *Ohio* are within our King's Dominions. It is sufficient to observe, that they were made on Lands belonging to the *Indians* in our Alliance, without their Consent, and against their Inclination, which Lands have been confirmed to them under the Protection of *Great Britain*; and so are inconsistent with the Letter and Spirit of their Treaties; and if we suffer them to go on fortifying, it requires no Spirit

336 DISCOURSE XIV.

no Spirit of Prophecy to foretel, that it must sooner or latter prove fatal to these Colonies. These, and the like substantial Reasons, previous to any Hostilities on our Side, sufficiently prove our Cause *just*, and the War *necessary*. The Goodness of our Cause being so manifest we may humbly plead it before the Lord. But the Goodness of our Cause *alone* is not sufficient to ascertain Success. By provoking the Almighty, and disregarding his Providence, the best Cause in the World may be ruined. In asserting our most manifest Rights, in opposing the most unjust and injurious Designs, let us carefully remember *the Name of the Lord*.

7. And as a further motive to this, let us consider, in the next and last Place, that by securing the Favour of God, and by a humble and steady Reliance upon his Providence, we shall use the most certain and effectual Means towards obtaining the full and speedy Accomplishment of all our Expectations and Wishes.

Having Providence on our Side the Consequences will be unspeakably glorious.

What-

Whatsoever we do it shall prosper. We shall have, with Respect to our Enemies, every reasonable Desire fulfilled; every Desire that is consistent with Equity, Religion and Humanity. We shall see their Pride sufficiently humbled, and every injurious, unjust Design formed against us rendered vain and abortive. Success and Victory will attend our Fleets and Armies; past Defeats, and consequent Disgraces will be no more remembered: Our Plantations and Colonies will be effectually protected and secured; our own inestimable Blessings, as Britons and as Protestants, firmly established, and transmitted down whole and inviolate, if not with some essential Improvements, to such as shall come after us. We shall rejoice in the Salvation and Prosperity of our KING, and in the Stability and Firmness of the Protestant Succession. We shall rejoice in the Abundance of Peace, unalarmed by any Schemes of Oppression and Tyranny, unharrassed, undisturbed by intestine Broils and Animosities, Party Disputes and Contests, freed from all disquieting Fears both

338 DISCOURSE XIV.

of foreign and domestic Foes. We shall rejoice in all the happy Fruits of Trade and Commerce; our Pastures shall be clothed with Flocks, and our Hilles and Vales covered with Corn; they shall shout for Joy and also sing. Thus transcendently happy ourselves we shall effectually support our Allies and Friends; powerfully assert the Interest of Protestantism wherever endangered or oppressed, and every where become the Scourge and dread of Tyrants. In a Word, *Britain* shall sit as *QUEEN* among the Nations, every Eye shall see and admire its Glory, and all they shall prosper that love it, and seek its Good. Thus glorious and blessed is the Nation *whose God is the LORD.*

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DISCOURSE XV.

Delivered at Sarum, February 16,
1759, the Day appointed for a
public and general Fast.

PSALM CIII. Part of the 8th, and the
whole 10th Verse.

The LORD is plenteous in Mercy.—

*He hath not dealt with us after our Sins;
nor rewarded us according to our Iniqui-
ties.*

IF we take an impartial and extensive Survey of our national Guilt, we shall see abundant Cause for the Exercise of unfeigned Repentance, and deep Humiliation before the Footstool of the supreme Majesty. On the other Hand, if we reflect on the distinguished Prosperity of our

340 DISCOURSE XV.

Country, and in particular, on the numerous, signal Successes, which, in the several Parts of the Globe, have at length attended its Arms, we shall find peculiar Reason to celebrate the Praises of the Deity, and to acknowledge, with the warmest Sentiments of Gratitude, his *unmerited* Goodness, and *marvellous* Loving-kindness.

Perhaps therefore the most *reasonable* and *acceptable* Service we can now render to God, and consequently the best Method we can take to answer the several important Purposes of this Day's Solemnity, is to cultivate a *penitent humble Sense* of our numerous and heinous Transgressions, together with the *warmest Gratitude* for the Goodness of the Almighty; who hath not dealt with us according to our Deserts, but according to the Multitude of his tender Mercies. That we are a Nation heavily laden with Iniquity, and yet a People, who have received great Favours of the Lord, are Points, I apprehend, equally obvious and indisputable. Were the Question therefore now to be proposed, *where-with*

DISCOURSE XV. 341

with shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the high God? The natural Answer would be; with undissembled Penitence, with unaffected Humility, and the most thankful and spirited Praise.

But perhaps the Reasonableness and Propriety of such a Procedure would appear still more conspicuous and striking, did we take a more distinct View both of our Guilt, and common Prosperity. The happy Situation of our Country in its civil Capacity is perceived by every Eye, and reflected upon with peculiar Pleasure by all Ranks and Orders of Men; by all its genuine and cordial Friends of every Denomination. In this Respect, there is the most general and perfect Agreement.

But with Regard to the State of our Nation, as to Religion and Morals, very different and opposite Sentiments may possibly be entertained. It has not been unusual for vague and general Declaimers on divine and moral Subjects to represent the Age, in which they themselves lived, as singularly corrupt and degenerate, as sunk lower in every Species of Guilt than

342 DISCOURSE XV.

all the Ages, which preceded it. And no Doubt but many, and especially such as are of a gloomy Temperament; or strongly actuated by the delusive Fervour of Enthusiasm would give a Description in no wise more favourable of the *present* Times. Persons of this Complexion we find thus reprehended by the wise King. *Say not then what is the Cause that the former Times were better than these? For thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.*

But while some would greatly *exaggerate* the Guilt of the Times, and represent them as *totally wicked and abandoned*, it is possible that others, of a different Turn, might be dispos'd to describe them as *superlatively virtuous and good*; and as *excelling all preceding Ages in every Species of moral Perfection*. Persons of this Class would perhaps pronounce *all well*, in a Case, which exhibited the most dangerous and alarming Symptoms, and remain entire Strangers to all painful Apprehensions in the most critical and perilous Juncture. Allied to these are the following Characters drawn by the Prophet; *They have*

DISCOURSE XV. 343

have healed the Hurt of the Daughter of my People slightly, saying Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace. The Wound, it seems, was exceeding deep, yet these unfaithful Practitioners had Recourse only to *palliative Remedies*. The Danger was imminent and peculiarly threatening, yet was the deluded Patient buoyed up with the Hopes of *perfect Safety*.

But without treading in *their Steps*, who call Evil Good, or Good Evil, let us attempt to form an Estimate of Things according to the unerring Dictates of genuine Candour and Impartiality. If we inquire into the State of our Country, and adjust our Ideas of our national Character under the Direction and Influence of these Principles, it is more than probable that the Prospect in *Part* will greatly cheer and animate us, while, on the other Hand, a Variety of Objects will rise to View, which will tend not a little to grieve and bumble us, and yield us abundant Reason to acknowledge, that *it is of the Lord's Mercies we are not consumed*.

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344 DISCOURSE XV.

Perhaps in *some* good Qualities we *excel*. Perhaps many of the *social* Virtues were never better understood, and more universally practised than in the *present* Age. Our numerous charitable Foundations, a compassionate Regard to the Calls of the indigent, and to the various Miseries and Calamities incident to human Nature, the Prevalence of a candid and catholic Spirit, and the Regard paid to the generous dictates of the *perfect Law of Liberty*, countenanced and encouraged by our August and truly *Patriotic* Sovereign, and such as are in Authority under him, reflect distinguished Glory on *modern* Times. PERSECUTION, and, it is to be hoped, every Species of religious Bigotry, are as repugnant to the *prevailing Genius of Britain at this Time*, as they are to right Reason, to all the genuine Principles of Humanity, and to the Disposition and Character of the supreme Ruler and universal Parent; *who willeth all Men to be saved, and whose tender Mercies are over all his Works.* It is indeed allowed, and ought to be sincerely lamented, that the *social* Virtues are

DISCOURSE XV. 345

are *defective* in numerous Instances, and various Respects. It is too certain that they have not attained that wide Extent, and those elevated Heights, which they are *capable of*; but yet it is exquisitely pleasing to reflect, that the Degree of Excellence to which they have arrived is *such*, that a Man truly desirous of leading a *peaceable and quiet Life*, and of enjoying unenvied and unmolested his several natural, civil, and religious Rights, and all the various Benefits derivable from Society, would not be able to fix on *any* Period, either in *latter* or more *antient* Times, so correspondent to his Wishes in every Respect as the *present*.

But how favourable an Idea soever a Man, who forms a righteous, candid Judgment, may be disposed to entertain concerning our Character, considered in a *civil* and *social* Light; yet, if, in Order to complete his Estimate, he takes a Survey of the several Virtues, which are more peculiarly *personal*, and attentively reflects on our prevailing Temper and Behaviour in Relation to the Deity, the utmost Impartiality

346 DISCOURSE XV.

tiality and Candour will not prevent him from falling into different Sentiments.

What Man of Thought perceives not to what an exorbitant Height, the Love of Pleasure, and every Species of Sensuality is arrived. *In Works of the Flesh*, and the several Vices, which Revelation describes as bearing a more peculiar Opposition to Purity and Holiness, no Age, perhaps, abounded more than the present. *The Works of the Flesh are manifest*. The Land is greatly polluted. And they, who commit Abominations are not at all ashamed, neither can they blush. A melancholy Prospect to a Man truly solicitous for the Welfare of his Country, and for the further Continuance of its signal Prosperity; and which yields substantial Reason for the most pungent Sorrow, the most deep and general Humiliation.

Again, alike conspicuous, and equally characteristic of Modern Times is a growing Inattention and Indifference to Religion, and the several Duties of Piety. Here might be mentioned the great and rapid Progress of Scepticism and Infidelity, which

DISCOURSE XV. 347

which openly militate not only against the *Truth as it is in Jesus*, but also against several of the most weighty Maxims, and most momentous Conclusions of natural Reason, labouring assiduously, and too successfully to divert the Minds of Men from all Regard to Providence, and a future State; the *principal Securities* both of Piety and Virtue.

But as this Evil, of how pernicious a Nature soever it may be in itself, is not become *general*, and it is to be hoped never will; what therefore ought chiefly to alarm sober and considerate Men, and all who wish well to their Country, is the great and visible *Declension* of Religion, pure and undefiled Religion or real Piety among the *professed* Adherents to the *Faith of Christ*. Nothing can be imagined more worthy the Attention of all intelligent Creatures, and more conducive to the Well being either of *particular* Persons, or *public* Communities, than an uniform Propriety of Temper and Behaviour toward **HIM**, *who is high over all*, and the great original Source of all Good. *To love the*

348 DISCOURSE XV.

the Lord our God with all our Heart, with all our Mind, and with all our Strength, is the first and great Command.

A Sense of Duty to God, and a Regard to his universal Dominion ought invariably to influence and govern the whole reasonable Creation. *Whatsoever we do, it becomes us to do all to the Glory of God.* Yet, with Respect to numberless Multitudes, in the present Age, may it not be justly said, *that God is not in all their Thoughts.* *Thus saith the Lord consider ye that forget God, least I tear you in Pieces, and there be none to deliver.* God is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. He is Governor among the Nations ; the supreme Ruler in every State and Kingdom. Is not therefore that Neglect of God, that Want of Regard to a divine Superintendency, and to the various Exercises of true Piety, so conspicuous in the *Modern Character of Britons*, a Circumstance truly alarming ? Nothing more certain ; long and most sincerely has it been lamented by all sober and thinking Men, of every Sect and Denomination ; and it undoubtely calls for

DISCOURSE XV. 349.

for the most *speedy* and *general* Humiliation. Without expatiating then any further on our aggravated and complicated Guilt, and without giving a more particular Detail of our manifold Sins and Iniquities, what has been already advanced will yield sufficient Proof that *God is plenteous in Mercy*; *that he hath not dealt with us after our Sins, nor rewarded us according to our Iniquities*.

However, the *Justness* and *Propriety* of our Text, as *now* applied, will more evidently appear, if we attentively reflect on the distinguished *Prosperity* of our Country, and the repeated, and especially the more *recent* Interpositions of Heaven in its behalf. The late happy *Alteration* in our national Circumstances hath far exceeded our most sanguine Hopes, and justly claims our most grateful Admiration! The Time is not *forgotten*, when Dangers threatened us on all Sides, and when our Hearts felt the most *painful* Emotions. But *now* the Voice of Salvation and Rejoicing is heard in all our Coasts. For a Time the Favour of Heaven had been suspended. The very Staff of Life was in Part withheld from us.

The

350 DISCOURSE XV.

The Land began to mourn for the Want of Bread, and at once to fear the complicated Evils, which usually attend both Famine and the Sword. From without, the common Enemy threatened us with an Invasion. At Home our Repose was disturbed by popular Insults, and riotous Commotions. Unanimity and Steadiness had taken Leave of our national Councils. All our Schemes were disconcerted; Disgrace and Disappointment attended all our Efforts. Conduct and Intrepidity, and consequent Victory no longer accompanied our military Operations. *We fought and warred, but did not obtain.* Our Fleets were covered with Ignominy, and our Armies with Confusion. Murmuring and Discontent filled every Heart; our Hopes had well nigh vanished; we trembled for the Liberties of BRITAIN and of EUROPE.

The natural Genius of the Nation, for a Time forsook it; and the great Preserver of our Country hid his Face. At length the Lord returns, unveils the Glories of his Countenance, revisiting our Land in the Multitude of his Mercies. Having

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DISCOURSE XV. 351

first rescued our illustrious and gallant *Ally* from the inevitable Destruction, which seemed to threaten him, and gloriously asserted his righteous Cause on the memorable Plains of *Rosbach*, and thereby given an happy Earnest of our own Salvation, we soon felt the Benefit of his Presence, and the Efficacy of his Power. Our Hearts again revive, British Courage re-kindles; Wisdom and Vigour direct and animate our various Measures, our Affairs put on a cheerful Aspect, martial Skill and Fortitude possess their antient Seats; our Fleets and Armies are again arrayed with Majesty and Glory. The Enemy feels in every Part the mighty Change. His Insults are returned, our Troops repeatedly invade his Coasts, his Harbours are demolished, and his Ships destroyed or taken. He is driven from his *Encroachments*; his valuable Settlements, his Forts and Strongholds are wrested from him, and still remain as Trophies of British Valour. In a Word, Success attends the Arms of *Britain* by Sea and Land, and in all the various Quarters of the Globe. Every British

British Heart is joyful, Gladness shines in every Face. The Tumults of the People cease ; Discord takes its Flight ; party Distinctions no longer reign ; all are united in the Bonds of Peace. Scarcity again gives Way to Plenty ; the Fields are covered with Corn ; the various Seasons favour us ; the appointed Weeks of Harvest are reserved unto us ; the Poor are filled with Bread ; the Hills and Vales rejoice together. Let all the People be joyful before God, and let his high Praises be in every Mouth.

In celebrating the various Mercies of our God, it would ill become us to pass in Silence his condescending Regards to our *Flocks and Herds*. For a Series of Years, Multitudes of our Cattle were continually falling Victims to the Rage of an infectious Malady ; and little Assurance could we have, from the Nature and Reason of Things, of ever seeing the Evil removed : But at length Salvation from on high visited them. An important Blessing, a memorable Event, and worthy of a distinguished Place in the Annals of Britain among

DISCOURSE XV. 353

among the other signal Occurrences of
Fifty-eight: A YEAR of peculiar Joy to
the British Nation; A YEAR eminently
crowned with the Goodness of the Deity.

If therefore we seriously reflect on our multiplied Iniquities, and our aggravated Guilt, and particularly on the great and almost unexampled Prevalence of Irreligion and Sensuality; and on the contrary consider the many wonderful and *recent* Manifestations of heavenly Goodness, we have *super-abundant* Reason to acknowledge, that the Lord is plenteous in Mercy; and that he hath not dealt with us after our Sins, nor rewarded us according to our Iniquities.

I now proceed to conclude my Discourse on the Subject with a suitable *Improvement.*

Our Prosperity is great; the Mercies of the most High have abounded towards us; he hath dealt with us according to the exceeding Riches of his Goodness: A proper Season therefore to rejoice. To be joyful in the Day of Prosperity is a Dictate of Revelation as well as Reason. But yet in the

most prosperous Circumstances it becomes *sinful, mortal* Men to rejoice with *Trembling*. Vigilance and Circumspection are absolutely needful in *every* Season. Dangers attend us in *every* State. Without the Exercise of proper Caution, Prosperity may prove an *Inlet* to the most ruinous and fatal Evils. Of all Circumstances Prosperity *misimproved* is the most dangerous and destructive. *The Prosperity of Fools shall destroy them.* He therefore that would consult his Safety, and be free from Danger, must learn, in the happiest Situation, *to walk wisely and very circumspectly*. We read of *Jeshurun* that he *waxed fat and kicked*. Providence smiled upon him; the Blessings of Heaven were *liberally dispensed* unto him; he *misimproves* celestial Favour; becomes secure, insolent and vain; *forsakes the God who made him, and lightly esteems the Rock of his Salvation*. The Deity magnified his Kindness towards him, and signally blessed him. He on the contrary multiplies his Transgressions, and ungratefully adds to the Number of his Provocations. Therefore what *first concerns*

DISCOURSE XV. 355

cerns us, and all the Inhabitants of *Bri-*
tain, in the present happy and joyous
Circumstances, is to guard against the
Abuse of heavenly Favour, and the *Misim-*
provement of distinguished Blessings.

And this Point being properly attended to, the next Thing that merits our Regard is the *right Improvement* of our Happiness, which consists in the Exercise of unfeigned Penitence for our manifold Sins, and the consequent Practice of universal Righteousness. The great Design and *natural* Tendency of every Instance of divine Goodness towards any People is *to lead them to Repentance*; *that* Repentance the Fruit of which is unto Holiness, and the End everlasting Life. *Sin is a Reproach to any People*; whereas *Righteousness exalteth a Nation*, and is the best Defence and chief Glory of any Kingdom. The Guilt of our Nation is *great*, yet *greater* is the Mercy of God towards it. Actuated by a Sense of his abundant Goodness, may all Ranks and Orders of Men, this Day, *break off their Iniquities by Repentance, and their Sins by Righteousness*.

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356 DISCOURSE XV.

Among the many Thousands now assembled before the Throne of Mercy, let us in particular make this our *immediate Concern*. As we rejoice in the Felicity of our Country, and partake of its abundant Prosperity, let us present unto God the pleasing Sacrifice of a truly contrite Spirit, and a humble obedient Heart. Signal Mercies demand suitable Returns. What shall we render unto God, *who hath dealt so bountifully with us?* We will give up *ourselves unto the Lord, from this Day forth and for ever, as living Sacrifices holy and acceptable, which is our most reasonable Service.* Whatever others do, be it our stedfast Resolution to *serve the Lord.*

And being *first wise for ourselves*, let not our best Endeavours be wanting to conduct others also to the *safe, and peaceful Paths of Wisdom.* *Something all may do to serve the common Interest, and to increase the common Stock of Virtue and Piety,* the truest Riches of a Nation, its best Support, and surest Guard. More especially let the Heads and Governors of Families, the venerable Patrons and *divinely appointed*

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DISCOURSE XV. 357

Guardians of youthful Morals, walk before God, in the Sight of all their House. Let them command their Children and their Household to keep the Way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment. And may the high Authority of their Station be ever strengthened and confirmed by an Example irreproachable, and a Life adorned with all the Virtues of Humanity, and all the matchless Beauties of rational unaffected Religion. May the noble and divine Principles, by which their own Conduct is influenced and governed, be instamped on the Minds of all their Offspring, while most susceptible of good Impressions. Let them be taught betimes the important Art of Self-government. Let them be instructed in the Knowledge of him, *who made them*, and taste the exalted Pleasures and unrivalled Satisfaction arising from a well ordered Conversation, *in the earliest Days of Youth*; so that when arrived to Years of Maturity, and entering on the public Stage, they may be established *in the Way wherein they should go*; fortified against the various Evils and Temptations of an insnaring and delusive

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358 DISCOURSE XV.

World, and all the Allurements of Vanity and Vice; having *within* themselves a Treasure, which no secular Advantage, nor any illicit Gratifications shall ever tempt them to *renounce*.

Thus let *all*, in their respective Spheres, and in Proportion to the Extent of their Influence and Abilities, study to befriend the important Cause of Virtue and Religion, and so promote the common Interest of Society. Thus may *all*, as much as in them lieth, conscientiously perform the Part, which Providence hath assigned them; serving God and their Generation in his Fear, as they would properly acknowledge all his *past* Goodness, and would hope for the *Continuance* of his Protection and Favour, and for the full Attainment of all their Wishes. Let us *acknowledge* God in *all our Ways*, in all our Mercies; and on him let us place our whole Dependence. Let our exalted Prosperity, and our numerous Successes be attributed, not to our own superior Skill and Merit, but chiefly and ultimately to the seasonable Interposition of divine Providence. Not

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DISCOURSE XV. 359

unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name be the Glory.

We ought not indeed to forget the worthy *Instruments* of our Felicity, and the more immediate *Authors* of our various Blessings. We reflect with grateful Admiration on the Magnanimity and Firmness, the Uprightness and paternal Tenderness of our most illustrious and venerable SOVEREIGN; the Integrity and Wisdom, the patriotic Activity and Zeal of his several Ministers, the Conduct and Intrepidity of our Generals and Admirals, so gallantly seconded by our Soldiers and Seamen. Those illustrious Personages, who, in the Face of Dangers and of Death, have done so *valiantly*, and in the Cause of their Country have acquitted themselves so *honourably*, deserve every Mark of Distinction, which a great and grateful People are capable of giving them. Their Names will be had in *everlasting Remembrance*; their Memories will be blessed by Ages yet *unborn*, and their Praises sounded forth by all *succeeding Generations*.

But while we cheerfully render to these

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eminently respectable Characters *all deserved Honour*, let not the *supreme Director* of our Affairs, and the *original Cause* of our Prosperity be disregarded. Let us still remember the Name of the **LORD**. To his Name be rendered the chief Praise and ultimate Glory. *Let the People praise thee, O God, let all the People praise thee. The Right-Hand of the Lord is exalted, the Right-Hand of the Lord doth valiantly.* It is he that giveth *Wisdom to the wise, and Strength to all.* *The LORD is our Strength and Song, and is become our SALVATION.* Now therefore let us utter the Memory of his great Goodness. And as we would hope still to prosper, and look for the entire Completion of all our Wishes, let us still place our Confidence in him, taking the Cup of Salvation, and calling on his Name. Once the whole Nation acknowledged, that his Right-Hand alone could save it. All other Helps had been tried, and tried in vain. With one Heart therefore we sought the most HIGH. Our Cry came up before him, even into his Ears. He answered our united Supplications, and turned our Mourning

DISCOURSE XV. 361

Mourning into Joy. Shall we now grow unmindful of the Rock of our Salvation? No, our Hearts are *fixed* trusting in the Lord.

All Danger is not as yet passed. The Enemy is determined to make *another* Effort. And no doubt but he will collect all his Force, and exert his utmost Strength. The Events of War are *uncertain*. *Let not him therefore who girdeth on his Harness boast himself, as he who putteth it off.* Let us beware of all vain Confidence, and Self-Dependence: We *still need* the mighty Aid of Heaven. We *remember* God's past Mercies, therefore we will now trust in him.

Forsake us not O Lord, O Lord of Hosts, *mighty in Battle*: Still go forth with our Fleets and Armies; gird them with Strength, cloath them with Salvation, crown them with all Success and Victory *needful* to the Restoration of a *safe, honourable, and lasting Peace*. Protect, assist, and bless our Friends and Allies. Father of Mercies pity the human Race, and *remember that they are but Dust*. Spare, in Mercy spare the *Thousands* destined for Slaughter and Destruction. “ Put an “ End, O blessed God, to the Triumphs
“ of

362 DISCOURSE XV.

“ of Tyranny and Violence throughout
“ the World; to the Ambition, and
“ destructive Schemes of turbulent and
“ ungodly Princes; To the Effusion of
“ precious human Blood, and to the un-
“ natural Devastations and Calamities of
“ War. *Let not Nation rise up against*
“ *Nation any more, but let them turn their*
“ *Swords into Ploughshares, and their Spears*
“ *into pruning Hooks,* and learn to cultivate
“ the Arts of universal Harmony and
“ Peace; *That there may be no more hurt-*
“ *ing and destroying in any Region of the*
“ *Earth;* no more any Violations of the
“ natural, civil and religious Rights of
“ Mankind.” Peculiarly bless the British
Empire. Hear the united Supplications
of our Country assembled this Day before
the Footstool of thy Mercy. Preserve and
bless our KING. Make his Reign over us
more and more prosperous and glorious,
easy to himself, as well as happy to all his
Subjects. Establish the Protestant Suc-
cession in his royal House, and may *Britain*
remain throughout all Ages a Land of
LIBERTY. Amen.

DIS-

DISCOURSE XVI.

Being a farewell Discourse delivered
at WOTTON-UNDEREDGE.

JANUARY 2, 1757.

II COR. XIII. 11.

Finally, Brethren, Farewell.

The whole Verse runs thus; *Finally, Brethren, farewell, be perfect, be of good Comfort, be of one Mind, live in Peace; and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.*

I HAVE made Choice of these Words for the Subject of the ensuing Discourse, as I could fix on no other, which so fully express those truly affectionate Sentiments, and unfeigned good Wishes, which I shall

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364 DISCOURSE XVI.

ever think it incumbent upon me to entertain for you.

Permit me therefore, with a Heart devoted to your Service, and with a humble and upright View of promoting your common Prosperity and best Interest, to lay before you a few Things by Way of Christian Exhortation and friendly Advice.

Permit me to exhort you in *general*, as you would wish to be *happy* both here and hereafter, to secure at all Events the ONE THING NEEDFUL, and *that good Part*, which shall not be taken away from you.

If you would effectually consult your true Interest and Happiness, one Thing must be attended to, and comparatively speaking but *one*. Possessed of this, you are made for ever. This is a Pearl of inestimable Worth; and a wise Man, rather than not secure the Purchase, *would sell all that he hath*. This alone would be a sufficient Treasure; it contains in it more than all conceivable Riches. Compared to it all earthly Treasures put together are but as Things, which *are not*. Set in the Balance against it, they would be as nothing,
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DISCOURSE XVI. 365

yea less than nothing, less than Vanity. The Possession of this one Thing would make the most indigent of Men, in Effect, as rich as an Angel of God, or one of the Princes of Heaven. Whoever possesseth this, *virtually* possesseth all Things, whether they be Things present, or Things future. He shall never be destitute of any substantial Good, having a certain Title to all the *real* Riches both of Earth and Heaven.

In Praise of so inestimable a Treasure it is impossible to exceed, nay the most elevated Encomiums, that can be past upon it, would fall infinitely short of its full and intrinsic Value. Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it ever entered into the Heart of Man to conceive the Felicity of that Man, whose God is the Lord. An Interest in the divine Favour is the *supreme Good*, the *one Thing absolutely needful*. It is a Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon it, and happy, truly, completely, and eternally happy is every one that retaineth it. He that findeth this, findeth everlasting Life. To attain *this* is
the

366 DISCOURSE XVI.

the *whole* of *Man*. He that neglects this, neglects all.

To preserve the present Life, every Man, in full Possession of his Reason, would part, if necessary, with all other temporal Possessions. All that a Man, a wise Man hath, would he give for his Life; yet it is certain the Favour of God is *better than Life*; how *much better* no Tongue can tell, nor any human Heart conceive. Eternal Ages will not be sufficient to comprehend either the Length, Breadth, Height, or Depth of the Love and Favour of God, for in all Respects it *passest Knowledge*. It is sufficient for us to know that all those, who have an interest in it, are perfectly happy. Nothing shall either hurt or offend them. No Weapon, that can be formed against them, shall prosper. Neither Losses nor Disappointments, neither Poverty nor Sicknes, nor Death itself, though arrayed in all imaginable Terrors, can do them any *real* Injury. Though they walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, they have no Evil to fear. Nothing but Sin, in the whole Universe,

DISCOURSE XVI. 367

verse, can do them the least Prejudice.
When a Man's Ways please the Lord, he will make his Enemies to be at Peace with him. With Respect to all those who have a Friend in God, all things, all natural Evils of every kind, shall work together for Good. Death itself shall be *their Gain*. If this is a true Representation of Things, is not an Interest in the Favour of God the only Thing *absolutely needful*?

My Brethren, my Friends, I esteem you too highly to attempt to deceive you. Indeed, it is not a *vain Thing*, that I have now told you; *it is your Life*, the Life of your infinitely precious Souls. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all Acceptation. Whoever then has an Ear to hear, let him hear and live. Permit me again to assure you, that an Interest in the Favour of God, is the *one Thing needful*. Let this then be *first* and *principally* sought after. This obtained, all other Things shall be added unto you. This has annexed to it a Promise of the Life that now is, and that which is come. But, unless this be secured, we shall be inevitably undone.

Neglect

368 DISCOURSE XVI.

Neglect not then for one Moment this great Salvation. Give *all* Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure and firm. If ye do so, though the Mountains be moved out of their Place, and the whole Universe be involved in one common Ruin, *ye shall never fall, but have an Entrance ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of your Saviour and Lord.*

In this your Day consider. *Now is the accepted Time; now is the Day of Salvation.* Harken to the kind and inviting Voice of your yet gracious, though offended God, *to Day whilst it is called to Day, lest any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin.* With God, through Christ, whom he bath set forth to be a *Propitiation for our Sins, and not for our Sins only, but for the Sins of all true Penitents throughout the World,* there is plenteous *Redemption.* Let me then exhort you not to count Life itself dear unto yourselves, so that ye attain an Interest in the peculiar Favour and Love of God.

You are invited, most sincerely invited to drink of the *Waters of life freely.* Abundant Salvation is offered you upon the most

DISCOURSE XVI. 369

most gracious and condescending Terms; without Money and without Price. Through Christ Jesus, the Mediator of the new Covenant, there is Peace with God; Peace, upon Repentance, to the chief of Sinners. *To all those who obey him; and receive him as he is set forth in the Gospel, he is become the Author of eternal Salvation.* He is a merciful and mighty Saviour, both able and willing to save to the uttermost all those, who come to God by him, in the Way of unfeigned Penitence and new Obedience. Seeing then such a Saviour, such a High Priest hath been appointed for us, *in Things appertaining unto God,* let us apply with humble Boldness, and without Delay to the Throne of Grace, *that we may obtain Mercy, to forgive our Sins, and Grace to help according to our Need.*

This, my Brethren, my Friends, is perhaps the last Time, that I shall ever address you on so solemn and momentous an Occasion. Permit me then by the Mercies of God, by the Grace of Christ, and the inestimable worth of your own immortal Souls, to exhort you, to intreat,

B b beseech,

370 DISCOURSE XIV.

beseech, and pray you to be reconciled to God.

And having obtained a well-grounded Title to Salvation, permit me further to exhort you, as the *redeemed of the Lord, to walk before him in Holiness and Righteousness all the Days of your Life.*

Live not henceforth to yourselves, but to him who died for you, and rose again. Ever remember that you are not your own, but that you have been bought with a Price, not with corruptible Things, such as Silver and Gold, but with the precious Blood of the Son of God; glorify God, therefore, with your Bodies and with your Spirits, which are God's. Express your Gratitude to your Saviour and God, by walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless. Study to be found complete in the whole of the divine Will. Abound in Love, and in every Expression of Gratitude towards him, who loved you first, with such astonishing, unparalleled Love, as to send his only begotten Son to redeem and save you. Let the Love of God be ever the ruling Principle in your Hearts. To

love

DISCOURSE XVI. 371

love God with all your Heart, and with all your Soul, and with all your Mind, is the first and great Commandment. Having obtained Favour of God, be solicitous above all Things to abide in his Love, and to walk before him, unto all pleasing; giving all Diligence that ye may be found at last in Peace, without Spot and blameless. My Brethren, my Friends, are you determined to seek first and principally the one Thing needful, even an Interest through Christ in the Favour of God? Is it your unfeigned Resolution to give unto God henceforth the supreme Place in your Hearts, and to testify this, by an uniform, universal, and Persevering Conformity to his holy and perfect Will? If so resolved, permit me in

The next Place to exhort you to abound in Love one towards another, and towards all Men.

To the Love of God give all Diligence to add Brotherly Kindness and Charity. *This Commandment have we received from him, that he, who loveth God, love his Brother also. My Brethren walk in Love, as Christ also hath loved you. If God so loved us, we*

372 DISCOURSE XVI.

ought also to love one another. Whatever particular Denomination you may chuse to be distinguished by; whatever particular Sentiments and Opinions you may entertain; and how much soever you may differ from each other, in Regard to the Circumstantials and Nonessentials of Religion, and Things of doubtful Disputation: Whether you are Churchmen or Protestant Dissenters; remember that you are all *one* in Christ Jesus. Without Charity a Man is nothing; but *the whole Law is fulfilled by Love.*

My Brethren, and Fellow Christians, you will always bear me Record, that you never found in me an Advocate for any Species of Bigotry and Uncharitableness; but a Readiness, on all Occasions, to recommend fervent, unfeigned Love towards such as call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus of every Sect and Denomination. Permit me *once more* to recommend to your *particular* Attention, this most amiable and truly excellent Principle: This divine and Godlike Disposition. *Let all your Things be done with Charity.* Finally, love as Bre-

DISCOURSE XVI. 373

as Brethren; for Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is Love. God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God and God in him. My Brethren, Partakers of the the same heavenly Calling, and one common Salvation, what has been above advanced most intimately concerns you ALL; and it is impossible to entertain a better Wish on your Behalf, than that it may obtain the most abiding Place in all your Hearts.

But, perhaps, such of you as have more stately attended my Ministry in this Place, may expect some particular and distinguishing Proofs of my Friendship and Regard. Could I communicate any Thing that would have a Tendency, by the divine Blessing, to be of any *real* Advantage, and *lasting* Benefit to you, you have an undoubted Right to demand it. I would not knowingly withhold any Thing from you, that would be likely to be *profitable* unto you. May I then, with all becoming Humility and true Affection, offer a

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Word

Word of Advice relative to that Conduct, which would be most proper for you to maintain with Respect to yourselves, your Minister, and your Fellow Christians in general.

Permit me to advance a few Things relative to that Conduct, which may be most proper for you to maintain with Respect to yourselves. And

i. As a religious Society of Christians, think it of singular Importance to be closely united together in the Bonds of Brotherly Love and Christian Charity.

Had the great Apostle of the Gentiles been to expatiate on this Subject, he would have addressed you in Terms like these. *Brethren, ye are one Body in Christ, and every one Members of one another. Let Love therefore be without Dissimulation. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly Love, in Honour preferring one another. I beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the Vocation, wherewith ye are called, with all Lowliness and Meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in Love; and endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond*

DISCOURSE XVI. 375

Bond of Peace. By Love serve one another. Bear one another's Burdens; and having the same Love one towards another, look not every Man to his own Things, but every Man also to the Things of others. Above all Things have fervent Charity among yourselves; for Charity is the Bond of Perfection. See then that ye Increase and abound in Love.

No Society divided against itself can either flourish or stand long. Where Contention is, there is Confusion, and every evil Work. but innumerable Blessings attend on mutual Love. Love edifieth. Love is a never-failing Source of mutual Strength and Comfort. Would you therefore be happy, would you grow and flourish? would you increase with the Increase of God? Consider yourselves as Members of that Body, of which Christ is the Head: From whom the whole Body fitly joined together, and compacted by that, which every Joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the Measure of every Part, maketh Increase of the Body, unto the edifying of itself in Love. This I say and testify in the Lord.

376 DISCOURSE XVI.

My Friends, and Fellow Christians; *How good, how pleasant it is for Brethren to walk in Love, and to dwell together in Unity?* Whatever Differences may at any Time arise, *let brotherly Love always continue.* Be perfectly joined together in Love, “ever continue to be one well united, “firm, unjarring Society,” and as ye would be of good Comfort, be of one Mind and Judgment as far as ye conscientiously can, and at no Time indulge a caving, Disputatious Temper: *live in Peace, and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.* But as touching brotherly Love, ye have no Need, that I speak unto you, for I am not without pleasing Hopes, from former and latter Experience, that ye yourselves are already taught of God, to love one another; I would therefore only beseech you that ye increase more and more. But

2. Another Thing, which I apprehend, would not a little contribute to your Welfare, is a careful Attention to the Worship of God in your respective Families.

Seriously consider how the Lord hath threatened to pour out his Fury on the Families

DISCOURSE XVI. 377

lies that call not upon his Name. As you would acknowledge God in *all* your ways, study to acknowledge him in your Families. *Walk before God in the Sight of your House.* Whatever others do, said Joshua, in the Hearing of all Israel; *As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.* The same Resolution doubtless becomes the Heads and Governors of every Christian Family. Family Mercies, which are renewed every Morning, and every Night, surely call for correspondent Family Acknowledgments. As you would approve yourselves unto God, by praying always with *all* Prayer; Family Prayer among others will claim your serious and diligent Attention. *The Curse of the Lord is in the House of the wicked, but he blesseth the Habitation of the just,* Prov. iii. 33. Would you have the God of Heaven bless your Habitations, let every Family diligently seek his Presence and favourable Regards, and gratefully acknowledge every Instance of his Goodness. The more attentive you are to the Exercises of Religion in your Families, the better prepared and disposed you

378 DISCOURSE XVI.

you will be, for the public Solemnities of God's House. Religious Families will form, by natural Consequence, a religious Church. Would you then see Religion flourish in the Church, carefully attend to its Influence *first* in your respective Habitations.

3. Another Thing, I apprehend, that would not a little befriend your Interest as a religious Community, is the *religious Education of Youth*.

Let not any Thing, that in you lieth, be wanting to preserve your Children from the reigning Vices, and manifold Pollutions of a corrupt and degenerate Age. *Train them up in the Nurture, and Admonition of the Lord.* If you train up your Children in the Way, wherein they should go; you will have Reason to hope, that when they are old they will not depart from it. Happy will it be for you, and for your Children for ever, if you possess a Disposition of Mind similar to that of *Abraham*. *I know Abraham, said the Lord, that he will command his Children, and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord,*

to

DISCOURSE XVI. 379

to do Justice and Judgment. You have abundant Encouragement to attend to the spiritual Concerns of your Offspring, *for the Promise is, not only, to you, but also to your Children.* If you have any real Sense of Religion upon your own Hearts, what exquisite Pleasure must it give you, *to see your Children walking in the Truth?* And what solid Satisfaction must it afford you, when going off the Stage of Life, to think that your Places will be supplied by such as have a true Concern for the Glory of God, and the Interest of Religion in the World.

4. Permit me further, with a View to your Welfare, earnestly to recommend to you the holy and religious Observance of the Lord's Day.

If you have any real Concern for the Honour of God, and your Redeemer, you will not allow either yourselves, your Children, or Servants to dishonour the Lord's Day; but will be solicitous to have the great Ends and Purposes, for which it was instituted, properly answered by yourselves, and such as belong to you.

In

380 DISCOURSE XVI.

In proportion to your Regard for this Sacred Day, real, vital Religion may be expected to flourish amongst you. My Brethren, if once the unhappy Period arrives, when the allowed Neglect, and Profanation of this Day becomes general among you, depend upon it, that your very Being as a religious Community will be at an End. *Turn your Feet from the Sabbath, from doing your Pleasure on God's holy Day, and call the Sabbath a Delight, the holy of the Lord honourable, and honour him, not doing your own Ways, nor finding your own Pleasure, nor speaking your own Words. Then shall you delight yourselves in the Lord, and the Lord shall highly exalt you.* This, my Brethren, the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken. Would you then fare well? Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.

5. With a View to your Prosperity, as a religious Society of Christians, permit me seriously to intreat and exhort you, to pay greater Honour and Attention to the Supper of the Lord. *Do this in Remembrance of me,* is one of the plainest Precepts of our Religion. And it is truly astonishing

DISCOURSE XVI. 381

astonishing how any *professed* Disciples of Christ can possess a Mind at Ease under the wilful and habitual Neglect of it? How long has the Saviour been telling you, *Do this in Remembrance of me?* Yet your *Practice*, to so express a Command, or I might say, so endearing a Request, has returned no better Answer than this, *we will not do it.* I cannot think you ever intended to insult him, but what Defence you are able to make for yourselves, I cannot conceive. You cannot think an Injunction coming from him, who is represented as the Wisdom and Power of God, and whom we are commanded to *bear in all Things*, to be insignificant and trifling. You cannot think it a Matter of entire Indifference, whether you obey him, or not. Has he not said, *ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you?* Will you say, notwithstanding, that in this Instance you are not fit to obey him? In Answer to such a Plea it may be sufficient to ask; is it allowable, either in this, or any other Instance, that you should disobey him? Has he not required your Obedience? Has he

382 DISCOURSE XVI.

he not a Right to it? Are you not bound by the strongest Obligations to serve him? Do not you yourselves call him *LORD*? Can you then propose in any Instance to do him Honour by your Disobedience? If you think you cannot obey him as you *ought*, obey him as well as you *can*, beginning of him, whose Grace is all sufficient, to enable you to do it better. You charge your Redeemer exceeding wrongfully, if you either say, or think, that he is a *hard Master*. Far from it! *He is touched with the Feeling of all your Infirmities*. You greatly err indeed, not understanding the Scriptures, nor the Justice and Kindness of your Redeemer, if you think he has imposed any Task upon you impossible to be performed. Bear with me my Brethren, as it is the last Time, if I ask, whether this be not the Case with many of you, that you are ashamed and *afraid*, perhaps, to renounce the Religion of Christ entirely, and at the same Time secretly unwilling to live up to *all* its Obligations, which you think would be incumbent on you, were you to come to the Lord's Table?

What

DISCOURSE XVI. 383

What a Condition is this either to live or die in? Know you not what has been said concerning the *wavering* and *double-minded* Man? *The double-minded Man is unstable in all his Ways.* *He that wavereth is like a Wave of the Sea, driven of the Wind and tossed.* Let not him that wavereth think that he shall obtain any Thing of the Lord. Why halt ye betwixt two? If Christ is Lord *obey him;* observe all Things *whatsoever* he hath commanded you; give up yourselves *wholly* to him; and walk in all his Commandments and *Ordinances* blameless: And depend upon it, as a most certain Truth, that none of his Commandments are grievous. Why then such an Aversion to the sacred Memorial? Surely you cannot pretend with any Shadow of Reason, that *Do this in Remembrance of me* is a *hard Saying;* therefore cordially embrace it, and act without Delay agreeably to it; otherwise it may be feared that, in a few Years, the Commemoration of the Redeemer's Death at his Table, in this House, will become a Thing unknown. Let it be the great Concern of you all to
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384 DISCOURSE XVI.

be found complete in the *whole* of your Saviour's Will, that ye may have Confidence on the great Day of final Reckoning, and *not be ashamed before him at his Coming*. As ye name the Name of Christ, let none of you be as Strangers and Foreigners in his Church, *but fellow Citizens with the Saints and of the Household of God*, built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner Stone, in whom all the Building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord. In whom, through the Spirit, may ye all be builded together for an Habitation of God.

Having now finished what I proposed to say concerning your Conduct, as it more immediately relates to yourselves, may I here add a few Things concerning your Behaviour, with Respect to your Minister?

Could I think of any Thing, on *this Head*, that would be likely to prove beneficial, and advantageous to you, I would very freely communicate it. As you profess to dissent from the Establishment, and to have formed yourselves into a religious Society

DISCOURSE XVI. 385

Society of Christians on the Foot of religious and *Christian Liberty*, and to assert your Right of *private Judgment*, it is needless to advise you, not to receive with an *implicit Faith* any Thing, your Minister may propose. Pitiable would your Case be indeed, were you obliged absolutely to depend for *Instruction*, in Things relating to your spiritual and immortal well being, on any *fellow Creature* whatever. Rejoice with *Thanksgiving* in the Grace and Favour, wherein ye stand ; for the *Faith*, the *Gospel*, originally delivered to the Saints, that is, to Christian People in general, has been delivered also to you. The *Gospel*, in its *native Purity* and *Simplicity*, of itself, and without the Addition of human expositions, is abundantly sufficient to make wise unto Salvation every one, who carefully consults it, and is truly disposed to understand it. By means of the *Gospel*, ye are already *divinely taught*, thoroughly *instructed* in all Things *essentially* necessary for you, as *Christians*, to know. If you remain in Ignorance of these Things, ye yourselves are exceedingly to blame and have received

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386 DISCOURSE XVI.

the most extraordinary Grace or Favour of God in vain. *Ye have closed your Eyes, and walk in Darkness in the midst of Light.*

But I hope better Things of you, though I thus speak, and that ye need not *any Man* should *teach you those great Things of God*, the Knowledge of which is *essentially necessary* to your Salvation and final Happiness. By means of the Gospel ye are infinitely better taught than any *Man* can possibly teach you, for *ye are taught of God*. If. liv. 13. xxxv. 8. 2. Tim. 3. 15. 16. So that the Design of the Christian Ministry, I apprehend, is not *so much to instruct Christian People in the Knowledge of Christianity*, as to bring to *Remembrance* Things which they *already know*; to *remind* them of their Duty, and to *impress* a Sense of it more deeply and forcibly upon their Hearts and Consciences. That being the Case, it would ill become you, to take any *Man's Word* in matters of Religion, any further than it has plain Scripture to support it. Worthy the Imitation of all Christian People was the Conduct of the noble spirit-ed BEREANS, *who searched the Scriptures daily*

DISCOURSE XVI. 387

daily, to see whether those Things, which an Apostle of Christ had told them, were so.

In an Inquiry so laudable as this, your Minister himself, if a Man of real Honour and Disinterestedness, and faithful to his own Master, will be disposed to give you all possible Encouragement, and openly to commend you. And I hope, my Brethren, you will never think a Minister of a different Disposition worthy of your Attention, who shall arrogantly claim Dominion over your Faith and religious Opinions, or be actuated by any higher Ambition than that of being a ready cheerful *Helper of your Joy*. How eminent soever he may be in Piety and ministerial Accomplishments, by no means think him perfect, or infallible ; and therefore never expect either Perfection, or Infallibility from him. If you do, you will find yourselves frequently disappointed, and you may justly reckon him a Man of consummate Vanity, and egregious Folly, if he makes any Pretensions to either. The more Piety he has, the more Humility he will have, and consequently the more ready he will

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388 DISCOURSE XVI.

be to acknowledge his Imperfections. And the more Learning and Knowledge he has acquired, the more ready to own that *he knows only in Part*. With Respect to Knowledge in particular, to be honest and impartial in his Researches, and right in the main, will be the Height of his Hopes and Wishes. And I think your Expectations concerning him, in this Respect, should rise no higher. But whatever your Minister's Accomplishments may happen to be; how eminent soever his Qualifications for the Pulpit, and his own particular Function; yet you will not suffer him, should he attempt it, to impose any Thing upon you as an Article of Faith, without previous Conviction.

And as you will thus maintain your own Liberty and Christian Independency, and not subject *your* Faith to that of your Minister, so, on the other Hand, you will shew no Disposition to subject *his* Faith to *yours*; nor even expect, unless you yourselves were infallible and perfect in Knowledge, that he should understand every part of divine Revelation just as you do, or
that

that his Sentiments and Conceptions of Things should entirely coincide with your own. A Disposition like this, as it would be unfriendly to the Spirit of Inquiry, and would operate in direct Opposition to the Apostolic Advice to Christian Ministers in general, to give Attendance to Reading and Meditation, that their *Profiting* may appear unto all Men ; so would it have a particular Tendency to prevent your own, as well as your Minister's further Improvement in Christian Knowledge, and spiritual Understanding.

Perfect Similarity and Correspondence of Sentiments and Opinions, in a State where neither Minister nor People can make any just Pretensions to Infallibility, is probably what will never happen, and what I apprehend, is in no Degree necessary. The Things of *principal* Moment, among the several Qualifications of a Christian Minister, and of infinitely *greater* Moment than all real or imaginary Orthodoxy, are *Integrity* and *Candour*, a good and an honest Heart. And as a Tree is known by its Fruit, so whether your Minister is pos-

fessed of these, you can only determine by the general Tenor of his Life and Conversation. Possessed of these, he *can be* neither a *Heretic* nor a *Bigot*. Whatever his particular Notions and Opinions may happen to be, he is undoubtedly upon the whole, and in Regard to all Matters of *essential* Importance, *sufficiently* orthodox. Such a Person will not display, on any Occasion, a furious *intemperate* Zeal for his own Peculiarities of Sentiment, nor lay any *undue* Stress on Things of uncertain Interpretation and doubtful Disputation. A Minister who is both *honest* and *Candid* will be as unwilling, as he is unable to lead you into any dangerous Errors. Sincerity and Charity are the highest Perfection, and the chief Glory of a Man and a Christian, more especially of a Christian Minister. A Minister possessed of these will be as truly solicitous to promote *your* Interest as his *own*; or to ~~adopt~~ the emphatical Language of Inspiration, *He will seek not yours, but you.* ii. Cor. xii. 14.

But further, a becoming Regard to your own Interest, as well as that of your Minister

DISCOURSE XVI. 391

nister will induce you to give him, in the faithful Discharge of the Duties of his Function, all the Encouragement you can. No Discouragements whatever will affect him so much as those, which arise from his own People. One Person *in* the Church may throw more Obstacles in his Way, and do more to prevent his Success than twenty *out of* it. In every Sense, no Foes are so hurtful and dangerous, as those of a Man's own House. In a religious Society of Christians a Person the most *incapable of serving its Interest*, may notwithstanding have it in his Power to do a great Deal to *injure* it. In Proportion as one Member is disordered, all the others also will suffer. Sickness, in any one Part, may affect the Health, and prevent the Growth of the whole Body. Now my Brethren are ye the Body of Christ, and Members in particular. And it is the Will of God, that there should be no Schisms in the Body; but that the Members should have the same Care one for another.

May a genuine Christian Solicitude for each others Welfare be a never failing

C c 4 Principle

Principle in all your Hearts: And may your Minister also feel its happy Influence, and have Occasion, from its blessed Effects, perpetually to rejoice; and thence be excited to go on with renewed Vigour and Alacrity, in every Part of his Work, as a Helper of your Joy. In a Work so directly tending both to your Pleasure and Profit, you will always be disposed to give him all suitable Encouragement. You will attend on his Ministrations as often, and as constantly as you conveniently can; and you will make him sensible, that your great Design in attending is to get Good to your Souls; to improve in Holiness and Virtue, in every moral Perfection and Excellence.

In that Case, if he is deserving of any Part of your Esteem and Regard, he will not *needlessly* and *wantonly* say, or do any Thing, that will be disagreeable to you, but study in all Things to *please* you to your Edification, as far as he can do it with a good Conscience. Though it is your Privilege to judge *what is right*; you will shew no *Fondness* for the Office of a *Censor*. And when you think you have some

some Occasion to assume the Character, you will do it with Gentleness, Meekness, and good Nature, and not with Rigour and Severity. As you will not *watch for Iniquity, nor lay a Snare for him that reproves, so you will not make him an Offender for a Word,* If. xxix. 20, 21. If at any Time an Objection to what he has delivered should arise in your Minds, you will mention it, if at all, to your Minister himself, in a *private and friendly Manner.* Perhaps he may be able to shew that you really *mistook his Meaning;* for *Hearers* may sometimes mistake as well as the *Speaker:* Or at least he may very effectually convince you, that you ought by no Means rigidly to censure him. *Let all your Things* with Respect to him, as well as all others, be done with Charity, ever shewing a Disposition rather to commend than blame; for if he loves you, and is truly solicitous to advance your best Interest, and sincerely intends your Benefit, it will be a grievous Disappointment to him, if instead of meeting with your Approbation, he has *dishonoured and offended you.*

If you

394 DISCOURSE XVI.

If you should observe some *real Imperfections*, in the Course of his Ministrations, be not fond of *exposing* and *exaggerating* them, for, in Consequence, you will probably sink your own Reputation as a religious Community, in Proportion as that of your Minister is lessened. In every Respect let your Treatment of him be such as you would expect yourselves, if in his Place. In a Word, if your Minister should be of a generous, grateful Temper, and of any Delicacy of Sentiment, bear this always in Remembrance, that the better you use him, the better he will serve you. Ill Treatment mends no Man.

To conclude this Head, permit me humbly to advise you, if your Minister be not so already, after competent Trial, to get him *ordained*. By that Means you will give him a very substantial Proof of your Respect for him, and perhaps prevent some Inconveniences, which may otherwise occasionally arise with Relation both to you and him. Will it not be a peculiar Satisfaction to you to have your Children
devoted

DISCOURSE XVI. 395

devoted to God, and his Service, in *Baptism*, by a Man after your own Heart? Will it not yield some particular Pleasure to you, to receive the Lord's Supper *stately* from the Hands of one, who is the Minister of your Choice. But I proceed now

To offer a Word or two concerning that Conduct which you ought to maintain towards Mankind in general.

Give none Offence; but let love without Diffimulation abound towards all, and shew a Readiness, when Opportunity offers, *to do good unto all Men*. With Respect to your Brethren of the Establishment in particular, let your whole Conduct be *courteous* and *respectful*. Shew them on all Occasions that you dissent not, from an unso ciableness of Disposition, or Affectation to be singular, much less from an Obstinacy of Temper; but to maintain inviolate the Allegiance you owe to Christ, as the only King and Lawgiver of the Christian Church, and to preserve a good Conscience towards God. *Let your Moderation be known unto all*. Discover at all Times a Catholic,

396 DISCOURSE XVI.

a Catholic, candid Spirit, and a Readiness to join in full Communion and Christian Fellowship with all, in every Place, who profess the Faith of Christ, and own him for their common Lord: With all, who shall prescribe no other Terms of Admission, but such as appear to you to be *reasonable* and *scriptural*, and no other Rule for your Conduct as *Christians*, but the *Law of Christ, the perfect Law of Liberty*. Let not Bigotry and Uncharitableness be so much as once known among you. And if any others should be for War, be ye still for Peace. Follow *Peace with all Men, and Holiness, without which no Man, of any Sect or Denomination, shall see the Lord*: Looking diligently lest any Man fail of the Grace of God, lest any Root of Bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby any of you be defiled. Study in all Things to adorn the *Christian Doctrine*, and, in all Respects, to walk worthy of your *Christian Profession*, and your most high and holy *Vocation*.

FINALLY, BRETHREN, FAREWELL.

These Words are expressive of every good Wish, that the most benevolent Heart

DISCOURSE XVI. 397

Heart is capable of forming. I would therefore in the present Application of them be considered as most sincerely wishing you *all* every Blessing, both in this and a future World, which you yourselves can desire or conceive. May all Happiness attend you here, and hereafter. And, though I am now to leave you, I hope this will not be regarded as a *transient, temporary* Wish, but as the most *invariable* and *permanent*. Wherever Providence may fix the Bounds of my Habitation in future Life, my *best Wishes* will always attend you. I have manifold Reasons to consider you *all* under the *endearing Character of BRETHREN.*

My Brethren, Partakers of the *same common Nature*: May you all, in Soul and Body, prosper and be in Health.

My Brethren, my Countrymen, Partakers of the same inestimable Privileges of Britons, may Omnipotence be your Defence and Guard against all the Evils, and Dangers, which at this Time surround, and threaten you. O my Country! may all thy unrivalled Privileges be perpetuated, and remain inviolate, while Sun and

Moon

398 DISCOURSE XVI.

Moon endure. *For my Brethren and Companions sake I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the House of the LORD our God, I will ever seek thy Good.*

My Brethren, Inhabitants of a Town, where I have agreeably spent some Years of my Life; where I know no Enemy, and where I hope ever to retain many a Friend. Inhabitants of WOTTON, may your Trade and Commerce greatly flourish. Peace be within your Walls, and abundant Prosperity in all your Habitations.

My Brethren, my fellow Christians, Professors of the same unspeakably precious and most holy Faith. May Christ the Hope of Glory be for ever yours : In a Word, may all Things be yours, whether they be Things present, or Things to come.

My Brethren of the Establishment, permit me thus publicly and thankfully to recognize your candid Spirit and kind Behaviour. In Proportion to the Superiority of your Privileges, whether real or imaginary, as Members of so respectable a Protestant Church, may you excel in all

Goodness,

DISCOURSE XVI. 399

Goodness, and abound with all Blessings.

And you my Brethren, who have more stately attended my Ministry, may you be filled with that blessed Spirit, whose Fruit is in all Goodness, Righteousness and Truth, and all the best Consolations. If I had not some peculiar Solicitude for your Welfare I might be justly deemed a Stranger to every Emotion of Friendship, and every Sentiment of Gratitude.

For six Years have we gone up to the House of God together. During that Time I very honestly intended your Benefit; happy for you, as well as joyous to me, if the Success has been, in any Degree, *answerable*. I have laboured amongst you with a cheerful and willing Mind, though not without a Mixture of manifold Imperfections and Weaknesses. With great Patience you bore with them, and with great Alacrity and Tenderness have you ever consulted my Welfare. Your Generosity and Candour, and every Instance of your Friendship, and Christian Benevolence I would now openly and gratefully acknowledge, as well as keep in *everlasting*

400 DISCOURSE XVI.

ing Remembrance. Though I leave you, I have the Satisfaction to reflect, that it is on the Foot of Friendship; and I am confident I shall never have occasion to consider you in any Character, less agreeable and pleasing than that of *Friends*. My Brethren, my *Companions for Years*, for ever my *Friends*: For ever may you rejoice in the abundance of Prosperity and Peace. Abundantly may you partake of the Blessings of the Sanctuary, and the Provisions of the Lord's House. Soon may you be supplied with a faithful, able, and successful Minister, one that shall come among you *in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ*. May you be filled with all the Fruits of true Holiness, and ever flourish in the Courts of our God. And when all your Concerns with the present State of Probation are at an End, may you be fixed as Pillars in the Temple of God on high, and go no more out. Finally Brethren, by whatever Consideration I am privileged so to call you, may you one and all be *HAPPY, exceeding abundantly happy above*

DISCOURSE XVI. 401

all that I, or you are able to ask, or even to think.

Before I conclude, permit me, with real and unaffected Earnestness, to ask one Favour of you all, and that is a perpetual Share in your Prayers and best Wishes. *Brethren pray for me,* that, wherever my future Lot on Earth be cast, I may obtain Mercy of the Lord to finish Life, and the Work of the Christian Ministry well and with Joy. *Pray for me,* that, though I may never see you all again in one Assembly here on Earth, I may see you all in Heaven, there to dwell for ever with one another, and with the Lord. My Friends and Fellow Christians, *Whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of a good Report:* If there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these Things. And those Things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and

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ED OVI 3

402 DISCOURSE XVI.

*seen in me, conformable to sound Reason,
and the Word of GOD, do: And the GOD
of Peace shall be with you all. Amen and
Amen.*

F I N I S.

3 NO 63

E R R A T A.

Page	Line	
28	17	Dele Comma after the last Word.
35	4	For Character, read Characters.
39	14	For Scriptures, r. Scripture.
45	18	Aster knowingly-dele Comma.
73	23	Dele Comma after Character.
89	17	Dele ditto after there is.
110	9	For deserving leis, r. deserving of leis.
175		Title, for the only infallible, r. an infallible
177	1	Dele a before Conscience.
195	8	Dele Comma after desire.
279	6	Dele that
342	4	For Fervour, r. Fervours.